

An Advanced History of India

Part I: Ancient India

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MADRAS

AN ADVANCED HISTORY OF INDIA

Part I : Ancient India

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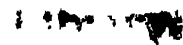
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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE chequered annals of our ancient land have been the theme of many a writer of the East as well as the West. If a fresh attempt is now made to recite the *itihāsa purāṇa* it is due in large measure to the accumulation of new stocks of information which every year are yielded to the spade of the archaeologist and the patient industry of the scholar. It is also due in part to the teaching of experience which suggests the need, with fresh data at our disposal, of viewing things from a different angle of vision.

The book which is now published is primarily intended to meet the requirements of advanced students who have already an acquaintance with the broad outlines of the subject. It has been the endeavour of the authors to place before them in the course of the narrative such details about the salient features of Indian History in the different periods of its evolution as may be fitted into the framework of the story provided for them at the earlier stages of their educational career. In doing this a special stress has been laid on administrative, social, economic, and cultural aspects, which do not always receive in studies of this kind the attention that is their due. A prominent place has also been given to such important topics as the colonial and cultural expansion of the ancient Hindus, the evolution of different types of art and architecture, and the growth of a new India as a result of the impact of different civilisations in recent times.

The history of the latest periods has been written on a somewhat novel plan. Instead of dealing separately with the brief rule of each succeeding Governor-General, an attempt has been made to treat in their logical sequence such absorbing subjects as the rise and growth of a remote island people as a political power in our country, the different phases of constitutional and administrative changes, and the social, religious, and economic conditions during well-defined periods. In other words, in treating the events of the modern age, attention has in the main been focused not so much on personalities as on movements and courses of policy. This method may involve some loss of dramatic interest but has the merit of tracing clearly the main threads of history in a given epoch.

We have tried to make the details as accurate and authentic as possible in the light of the latest researches, and where no definite conclusion is possible we have sought to indicate the different view-points in a detached spirit. An attempt has been made to add flesh and blood to the dry skeleton of history, particularly that of the earlier periods, with the help of such materials as may be gleaned from a close scrutiny of the original sources. The maps, select bibliographies, and genealogical and chronological tables, will, it is hoped, be of some use to earnest investigators. We need not dilate upon other special features of the book which cannot be missed by anyone who examines it.

A joint literary production, in spite of its obvious advantages, is not unlikely to suffer from some serious defects. The authors sought to minimise these as far as possible by periodical discussions and scrutiny of the contents of each chapter. Whether, and how far, they have been able to avoid the imperfections that are apt to occur in a work of this kind, it is for others to judge. Apart from this, some defects may be attributed to the printing of the book in Great Britain at a time when communication between the authors and the publishers was rendered more and more difficult by circumstances over which they had no control. All these shortcomings may, we hope, be largely removed in future editions of the work. In the meantime we can only crave the indulgence of our readers for such errors of omission and commission as they may detect in the following pages.

In writing Oriental names and expressions we have adopted in a general way the method of transliteration which has been followed in standard works like the *Cambridge History of India*.

We take this opportunity of expressing our deep obligation to the *pūrva sūris* and to various individuals and associations who have lent us illustrations, etc., belonging to them, with permission to make photographic reproductions. Our special thanks are due to the representatives of the publishers for the keen interest they have taken in the progress of the work. If the book now offered to students helps in some measure to prepare the ground for a fuller and clearer view of the "broadening stream" of our country's history, the labour of the authors will be amply repaid.

R. C. MAJUMDAR
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PART I
ANCIENT INDIA

CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL ASPECTS AND UNDERLYING UNITY

INDIA is the name given to the vast peninsula which the continent of Asia throws out to the south of the magnificent mountain ranges that stretch in a swordlike curve across the southern border of Tibet. This huge expanse of territory, which deserves the name of a sub-continent, has the shape of an irregular quadrilateral. Ancient geographers referred to it as being "constituted with a four-fold conformation" (*chatuḥ samsthāna samsthitam*), "on its south and west and east is the Great Ocean, the Himavat range stretches along its north like the string of a bow". The lofty mountain chain in the north—to which the name Himavat is applied in the above passage—includes not only the snow-capped ridges of the Himālayas but also their less elevated offshoots—the Patkai, Lushai and Chittāgong Hills in the east, and the Sulaiman and Kirthar ranges in the west. These lead down to the sea and separate the country from the wooded valley of the Irrāwaddy on the one hand and the hilly tableland of Īrān on the other.

Politically, the Indian empire as it existed before August 15, 1947, extended beyond these natural boundaries at several points and included not only Baluchistān beyond the Kirthar range, but also some smaller areas that lay scattered in the Bay of Bengal. With the exception of the outlying territories beyond the seas, the whole of the vast region described above lay roughly between Long. 61° and 97° E. and Lat. 8° and 37° N. Its greatest length was about 2,900 kilometres, and its breadth not less than 2,190 kilometres. The total area of the empire, excluding Burma which was constituted as a separate unit under the Government of India Act of 1935, might be put at 4,095,000 square kilometres and the population inhabiting it, according to the census of 1941, the last taken before the creation of Pākistān, at about three hundred and eighty-nine millions.

The sub-continent of India, stretching from the Himālayas to the sea, is known to the Hindus as *Bhārata-Varsha* or the land of Bharata, a king famous in Purānic tradition. It was said to form

part of a larger unit called *Jambu-dvīpa* which was considered to be the innermost of seven concentric island-continents into which the earth, as conceived by Hindu cosmographers, was supposed to have been divided. The Purāṇic account of these insular continents contains a good deal of what is fanciful, but early Buddhist evidence suggests that *Jambu-dvīpa* was a territorial designation actually in use from the third century B.C. at the latest, and was applied to that part of Asia, outside China, throughout which the prowess of the great imperial family of the Mauryas made itself felt. The name "India" was applied to the country by the Greeks. It corresponds to the "Hi(n)du" of the old Persian epigraphs. Like "*Sapta sindhavah*" and "*Hapta Hindu*"—the appellations of the country of the Aryans in the *Veda* and the *Vendidad*—it is derived from the Sindhu (the Indus), the great river which constitutes the most imposing feature of that part of the sub-continent which seems to have been the cradle of its earliest known civilisation. Closely connected with "*Hindu*" are the later designations "*Hind*" and "*Hindusthān*" as found in the pages of mediaeval writers.

India proper, excluding its outlying dependencies, is divided primarily into four distinct regions, viz., (1) the hill country of the north, styled *Parvatāśrayin* in the Purāṇas, stretching from the swampy jungles of the Tarai to the crest of the Himālayas and affording space for the upland territories of Kāshmir, Kangra, Tehri, Kumāun, Nepāl, Sikkim and Bhutān; (2) the great northern plain embracing the flat wheat-producing valleys of the Indus and its tributaries, the sandy deserts of Sind and Rājputāna as well as the fertile tracts watered by the Ganges, the Jumnā and the Brahmaputra; (3) the plateau of South Central India and the Deccan stretching south of the Gangetic plain and shut in from the rest of the peninsula by the main range of the Pāripātra, roughly the Western Vindhya, the Vindhya proper, the Śahyādri or the Western Ghāts and the Mahendra or the Eastern Ghāts; and (4) the long and narrow maritime plains of the south extending from the Ghāts to the sea and containing the rich ports of the Konkān and Mālabār, as well as the fertile deltas of the Godāvari, the Kṛishṇā and the Kāverī.

These territorial compartments marked by the hand of nature do not exactly coincide with the traditional divisions of the country known to antiquity. In ancient literature we have reference to a fivefold division of India. In the centre of the Indo-Gangetic plain was the *Madhya-deśa* stretching, according to the Brāhmanical accounts, from the river Sarasvatī, which flowed past Thānesar and Pehoa (ancient Prithūdaka), to Allahābād and Benares, and,

according to the early records of the Buddhists, to the Rājmaḥal Hills. The western part of this area was known as the *Brahmarshi-dēśa*, and the entire region was roughly equivalent to *Āryāvarta* as described in the grammar of Patañjali. But the denotation of the latter term is wider in some law-books which take it to mean the whole of the vast territory lying between the Himālayas and the Vindhya and extending from sea to sea. To the north of the *Madhya-dēśa*, beyond Pehoa, lay *Uttarāpatha* or *Udīchya* (North-west India), to its west *Aparānta* or *Pratīchya* (Western India), to its south *Dakṣhiṇāpatha* or the Deccan, and to its east *Pūrva-dēśa* or *Prāchya*, the Prasii of Alexander's historians. The term *Uttarāpatha* was at times applied to the whole of Northern India, and *Dakṣhiṇāpatha* was in some ancient works restricted to the upper Deccan north of the Kṛishṇā, the far south being termed *Tamilakam* or the Tamil country, while *Pūrva-dēśa* in early times included the eastern part of the "middle region" beyond the *Antarvedī* or the Gangetic Doāb. To the five primary divisions the Purāṇas sometimes add two others, viz., the *Parva-āśrayin* or Himālayan tract, and the Vindhyan region.

The course of Indian history, like that of other countries in the world, is in large measure determined by its geography. Each of the territorial units into which the hand of nature divides the country has a distinct story of its own. The intersection of the land by deep rivers and winding chains flanked by sandy deserts or impenetrable forests, fostered a spirit of isolation and cleft the country asunder into small political and even social units, whose divergences were accentuated by the infinite variety of local conditions. Tendencies towards union and coalescence are most marked only in the vast riparian plain of the north and the extensive plateau in the interior of the peninsula, enriched and regenerated by the life-giving streams that flow from the heights of the Himālayas and the Western Ghāts. The stupendous mountain chain which fences this country off from the rest of Asia, while it constituted India a world by itself and favoured the growth of a distinct type of civilisation, never sufficed to shelter the sunny realms of the Indus and the Ganges from the inroads of ambitious potentates or wandering nomads. These invaders stormed one after another through the narrow defiles that break through the great rocky barrier and lead into the plains of the interior. The long coast studded with wealthy ports "lay open to the barks of" intrepid buccaneers and adventurers from far-off climes.

The mountain passes and the sea, however, were not mere

gates of invasion and conquest. They fostered also a more pacific intercourse with the outside world. They brought to this country the pious pilgrim and the peaceful trader and constituted high-ways for the diffusion of Indian culture and civilisation throughout the greater part of the Asiatic continent as well as the islands that lie off the coast of Coromandel and the peninsula of Malaya.

The size of India is enormous. The country is almost as large as the whole of the continent of Europe without Russia, and is almost twenty times as big as Great Britain. Even more remarkable than the immensity of its area is the extreme diversity of its physical features. India embraces within its boundaries lofty mountains steeped in eternal snow, as well as flat plains "salted by every tide", arid deserts almost untouched by the feet of man, as well as fertile river valleys supporting a population of over three thousand persons to the square mile. The greater part of this sub-continent had been knit into one political unit in the nineteenth century. But from August 15, 1947, two self-governing Dominions were carved out of it, known respectively as India and Pakistan, which form parts of the British Commonwealth. There are, however, certain areas, e.g. Nepāl and Bhutān, which lie outside the limits of this Commonwealth. There were, moreover, more than five hundred states, ruled by Indian Princes, with a total area of about 1,813,000 square kilometres, which commemorated the vanished glory of defunct kingdoms and empires, and enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy in internal affairs under the aegis of the British Crown. They have now been integrated with either India or Pakistan.

The magnitude of the population of India is quite in keeping with the immensity of its geographical dimensions. As early as the fifth century B.C. Herodotus observed that "of all the nations that we know, it is India which has the largest population". The total number of inhabitants included within the sub-continent, excluding Burma, according to the Census of 1961, amounted to about five hundred and twenty millions, or about one-sixth of that of the whole world. This huge assemblage of human beings is made up of diverse ethnic groups, split up into countless castes, professing numerous creeds, speaking about two hundred different languages and dialects. It represents every phase of social evolution, from that of the primitive tribesman who still lives by hunting and collecting forest produce, to that of the polished inhabitant of cities well equipped with the most up-to-date scientific or humanistic lore.

A close examination of this variegated conglomeration of races,

castes and creeds, reveals, however, a deep underlying unity which is apt to be missed by the superficial observer. This unity was undoubtedly nurtured in the nineteenth century by a uniform system of administration, easy means of communication and the spread of education on modern lines. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that it is wholly the outcome of recent events and was quite non-existent in ages long gone by. The fundamental unity of India is emphasised by the name *Bhārata-Varsha*, or land of Bharata, given to the whole country in the Epics and the Purāṇas, and the designation *Bhārātī santati*, or descendants of Bharata, applied to its people.

*“Uttaram yat samudrasya
Himādreśchaiva dakṣiṇam,
Varsham tad Bhāratam nāma
Bhārātī yatra santatiḥ.”*
(Vishṇu Purāṇa, II, 3. 1.)

“The country that lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains is called Bhārata; there dwell the descendants of Bharata.”

This sense of unity was ever present before the minds of the theologians, political philosophers and poets who spoke of the “thousand *Yojanas* (leagues) of land that stretch from the Himālayas to the sea as the proper domain of a single universal emperor” and eulogised monarchs who sought to extend their sway from the snowy mountains in the north to Adam’s Bridge in the south, and from the valley of the Brahmaputra in the east to the land beyond the seven mouths of the Indus in the west. In the third century B.C. a single language, Prākṛit, sufficed to bring the message of a royal missionary to the doors of his humblest subjects throughout this vast sub-continent. A few centuries later another language, Sanskrit, found its way to the royal archives of the remotest corners of this country. The ancient epics—the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*—were studied with as much devotion in the courts of the Tamil and Kanarese countries as in the intellectual circles of Taxila in the western Punjab, and *Naimishāranya* in the upper Ganges valley. The old religion of the Vedas and the Purāṇas still gives solace to the vast majority of the people of this country, and temples in honour of Śiva and Viṣṇu raise their spires on the snowy heights of the Himālayas as well as in the flat deltas of the Kṛishṇā and the Kāveri. The religious communities that do not worship in these shrines have not been altogether unaffected by their Hindu surroundings.

Instances are not unknown of friendship and communion between saints and prophets of rival creeds. Since the days of al-Biruni many adherents of Islam, the second great religion of India in point of numbers, have shown a profound interest in the science, philosophy and religion of their Hindu brethren, and to this day Hindu practices are not altogether a negligible factor in the village life of this country for the votaries of a different creed. Islam with its ideals of social democracy and imperialism has, in its turn, done much to counteract the fissiparous tendencies of caste and check the centrifugal forces in Indian politics by keeping alive the ideal of a Pan-Indian State throughout the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER II

THE PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

HISTORY is a record of the achievements of man. The history of India, like the annals of every other country, should therefore begin with an account of the times when men first settled in this land. But history proper only deals with facts, and facts can only be known from records of some kind or other. We cannot know the history of any people who have left no record of their existence. There may have been people or peoples who lived in India in primitive times, but the evidence of whose existence has not yet been discovered. For the present, at any rate, they must be left out of account altogether. We shall only deal with those inhabitants of India whose existence is known to us from some records they have left behind.

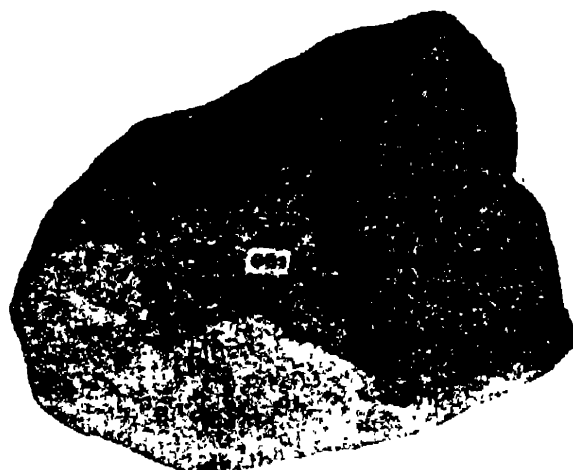
To begin with, these records consist almost solely of the rude implements which the people used in their daily lives. According to the nature and material of these implements, the earliest settlers in India have been divided into two classes, viz., Palaeolithic and Neolithic.

Palaeolithic Men

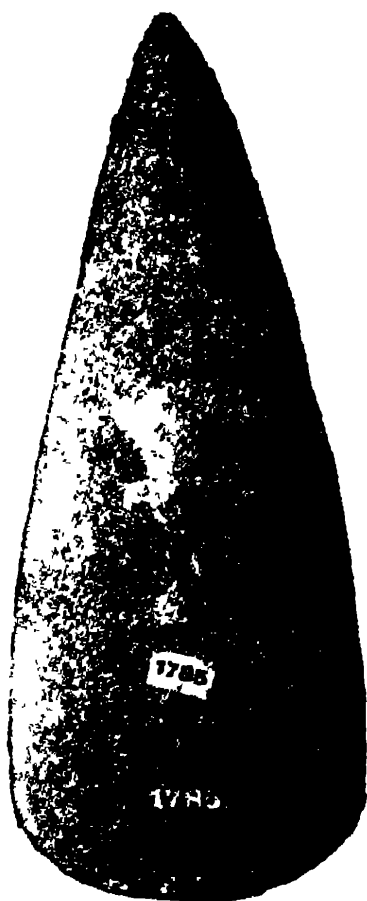
The term Palaeolithic is derived from two Greek words meaning Old Stone. This name is applied to the earliest people, as the only evidence of their existence is furnished by a number of rude stone implements. These are small pieces of rough undressed stones, chipped into various forms, which were originally fitted with handles made of sticks or bones. They served as weapons for hunting wild animals, and could also be used as hammers or for purposes of cutting and boring.

These chipped stones have been found in large numbers in different parts of India. They are usually, though not exclusively, made of a species of hard rock called "quartzite". From this fact the Palaeolithic men in India are also known as "Quartzite men".

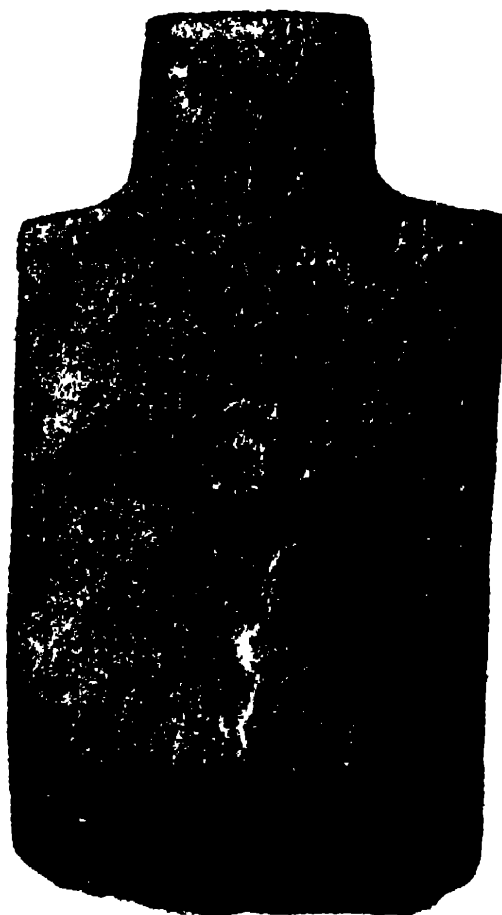
From the rough and rude stone implements which are the only records left behind by the earliest-known inhabitants of India, we



STRAIGHT-EDGED CLEAVER OF BROWN-
ISH QUARTZITE: CHINGLEPUT DISTRICT,
MADRAS PRESIDENCY



POLISHED CELT WITH POINTED
BUTT OF SPECKLED TRAP:
BĀNDĀ DISTRICT, ĀGRA PRO-
VINCE (U.P.)



POLISHED SHOULDERED CELT
WITH ADZE-LIKE EDGE, OF DARK
GREY SLATE, FROM THE TRANS-
GANGHIC AREA

can form only a very vague idea of their lives and habits. It is obvious that they were ignorant of any metals, and most of them had no fixed homes, though a few might have made huts of some sort with trees and leaves. They lived in constant dread of wild animals like tigers, lions, elephants and the rhinoceros. They

had no idea of agriculture, but lived on the flesh of animals and such fruits and vegetables as grew wild in jungles. They could not make pottery, and probably did not even know how to make a fire. In short, from our standpoint we can only regard them as savages, little removed from an animal life. It is well to remember this if we are to judge aright the long strides that men have made in developing that culture and civilisation of which we are so justly proud to-day.

It has been suggested that the Palaeolithic men belonged to the Negrito race, like the modern people of the Andaman Islands, and were characterised by short stature, dark skin, woolly hair and flat noses.

Neolithic Men

The capacity for progress is, however, an inherent characteristic of human beings which distinguishes them from animals. Consequently, as years rolled by, men acquired greater knowledge and skill in mastering the forces of nature. The rate of progress is, of course, difficult to estimate, and it may have been hundreds or thousands of years before a distinctly higher type of civilisation was evolved in India. The men who belonged to this age are called Neolithic. This term is also derived from two Greek words meaning New Stone. The significance of this name lies in the fact that in this age also men had to depend solely on stone implements, and were ignorant of any metals, except gold. But their implements were very different from those of the preceding age, for they used stones other than quartzite, and these were not merely chipped, but in most cases "ground, grooved and polished" as well. They were highly finished articles made into different forms to serve various purposes. They can be easily distinguished from the rough and rude implements of the Palaeolithic Age.

Remains of the Neolithic men are found in almost every part of India. An ancient factory for the manufacture of stone implements has been discovered in the Bellary district, Madras, where we can still trace the various stages of their construction.

The civilisation of the Neolithic men shows distinct traces of advance. They cultivated land and grew fruits and corn. They also domesticated animals like the ox and the goat. They knew the art of producing fire by the friction of bamboos or pieces of wood, and made pottery, at first by hand, and then with the potter's wheel. They lived in caves and decorated their walls by painting scenes of hunting and dancing. A few of these can be seen to-day both in Northern and Southern India. They also painted and

decorated their pottery. They constructed boats and went out to sea. They could spin cotton and wool and weave cloth. They used to bury their dead, and neolithic tombs have been discovered in some parts of India. Sometimes the dead body was put in a large urn and many of these urns have been discovered intact under the ground. The tombs known as *Dolmens* consist of three or more stone props in a circle, supporting a massive roof stone. These dolmens or megalithic tombs are characteristic of the Neolithic Age all over the world. Scholars also distinguish a culture midway between Palaeolithic and Neolithic, and call it Mesolithic (from Greek "*meso*" = middle). Its two chief characteristics were, first, that the stone implements used were extremely small, only about an inch in length (hence known as microlith from Greek "*micro*" = small); and secondly, that instead of quartzite they were made of chalcedony and other silicate varieties by a technical process differing from that employed in the Palaeolithic Age.

The age of the Palaeolithic and Neolithic men is called pre-historic, as we know hardly anything of this period save the meagre evidence supplied by the cave drawings and stone implements. We have not even any definite knowledge regarding the relations between these two groups of men. There are indications that suggest that the Neolithic men may have been the descendants of their Palaeolithic predecessors. But there are certain facts which militate against this view. Some scholars are of the opinion that not only are there no such relationships, but that there was a gap of many hundreds or thousands of years between the two periods. So long as our evidence remains as meagre as it now is, there will always be scope for such differences of opinion, and we shall have to deal with theories or hypotheses based on speculations. The question, however, belongs to the domain of anthropology rather than history, and need not be pursued any further.

The Age of Metals

There is, however, a general agreement that Neolithic men were the ancestors of the people who ushered in the next stage of civilisation which is distinguished by the knowledge and use of metals. That the transition from stone to metal was a slow and gradual process is proved by two undeniable facts, viz., the use of stone and metallic implements side by side, and the close resemblance in the shape of early metal and Neolithic implements.

There was, however, no uniformity in the use of metals in

different parts of India. In Northern India, copper replaced stone as the ordinary material for tools and weapons. Axes, swords, spear-heads and various other objects made of that metal have come to light in different parts of the country. It was not till centuries later that iron came to be known and gradually used as a substitute for copper. We can thus distinguish between a Copper Age and the Early Iron Age in Northern India. In Southern India, however, the Iron Age immediately succeeded the Stone Age, and we find no traces of the intermediate Copper Age.

Bronze is a good substitute for copper. It is an alloy made up of nine parts of copper and one of tin, and, being harder than copper, is more suitable for the manufacture of tools and weapons. We find accordingly that in some countries in Europe a Bronze Age succeeded the Neolithic. Bronze implements of early date have been found in India along with those of copper, but it does not appear that that metal was ever generally used in India to the exclusion of copper. In other words, there was, properly speaking, no Bronze Age in India.

With the Copper and Iron Ages we enter the limits of the historical period. It is a moot point to decide whether the period of the *Rig-Veda*—the earliest period of Indian history for which we possess literary evidence—belongs to the former or to the latter epoch. The general opinion is in favour of the view that the Iron Age had already commenced when the *Rig-Veda* was composed. Be that as it may, we have now a splendid example of the civilisation of the Copper Age. This civilisation flourished in the Indus Valley and spread over the neighbouring regions to a considerable distance. It is known as the Indus Valley civilisation and merits a detailed treatment in view of its importance. But before taking it up we must say a few words about the races of India.

Classes of People

If we examine the people of India, both according to physical type and language, we can easily distinguish four broad classes.

First, the majority of high-class Hindus, who are tall, fair-skinned and long-nosed and whose language is derived from Sanskrit. These are known as Aryans or Indo-Aryans.

Secondly, the people mostly living in the South Indian Peninsula, whose features are somewhat different from those of the first group and whose languages—Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese and Malayalam—are entirely different from Sanskrit. These are called by the generic name of "Dravidians".

Thirdly, primitive tribes living in hills and jungles who offer a striking contrast to the first category in physical type, being short in stature, dark-skinned and snub-nosed. Their languages are also quite different from those of the preceding two. The Kols, Bhils and Mundās belong to this class.

Fourthly, a people with strong Mongolian features, beardless, yellow in colour, snub-nosed, with flat faces and prominent cheekbones. These mostly live on the slopes of the Himālayas and mountains of Assam. The Gurkhās, Bhutiyas and Khāsis are striking examples of this class.

The last two classes of people may be regarded as descendants of the Neolithic peoples. We have already referred to the primitive type of civilisation in the Neolithic Age, and it does not appear that these peoples have made any appreciable progress during the thousands of years that have elapsed since then.

There is hardly any doubt that these primitive races at one time spread all over India. But they had to yield to the superior forces of the Dravidians, who gradually occupied some of their lands. The same process was repeated when large tracts of the country were conquered at a later time by the Aryans. The effect of these successive invasions by more cultured races on the primitive peoples was far-reaching. Many must have perished, and many more, reduced to subjection, formed the lowest strata in the community of the conquerors, while a few bands were saved from a similar fate by the shelter offered by fastnesses and jungles. This last category alone has preserved, to a certain extent, the physical features, the languages, and the habits of their remote ancestors, offering us a fair glimpse of the sort of life they must have led in times long gone by.

Philological researches have established a connection between these Neolithic peoples of India and the primitive tribes that lived in Indo-China, the Malay Peninsula and the Indian Archipelago. The German scholar Schmidt, for example, holds that the languages of the Mundās and Khāsis belong to the same family of speech (called Austric) from which those of the peoples of Indo-China and Indonesia have been derived. According to this view, these peoples, who were originally settled in India, "passed gradually to the east and south-east and traversed, at first the whole length of the Indo-Chinese peninsula, and then over all the islands of the Pacific Ocean up to its eastern extremity". Schmidt further believed that another current of emigration of the same people also started from India, but turned more directly towards the south and, touching only the western fringe of the

Pacific Ocean, proceeded, perhaps by way of New Guinea, towards the continent of Australia.

According to Schmidt's view, the Neolithic men of India played a dominant part in the early history of South-eastern Asia. But his theory has already been challenged by other scholars and can only be regarded as a provisional hypothesis.

The Indus Valley Civilisation

In recent years archaeological excavations have been carried on at Mohenjo-Daro in the Larkana district, Sind, and at Harappā, in the Montgomery district of the Punjab. These and smaller trial excavations at various other sites in Sind, Baluchistān, Punjab and even further east and south, have proved beyond doubt that some four or five thousand years ago a highly civilised community flourished in these regions. The antiquity of civilisation in India is thus carried back nearly to the same period which witnessed the growth of ancient civilisations in Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia. The valley of the Indus thus takes its rank with the valleys of the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates as having contributed to the most ancient phase of human civilisation of which we are yet aware.

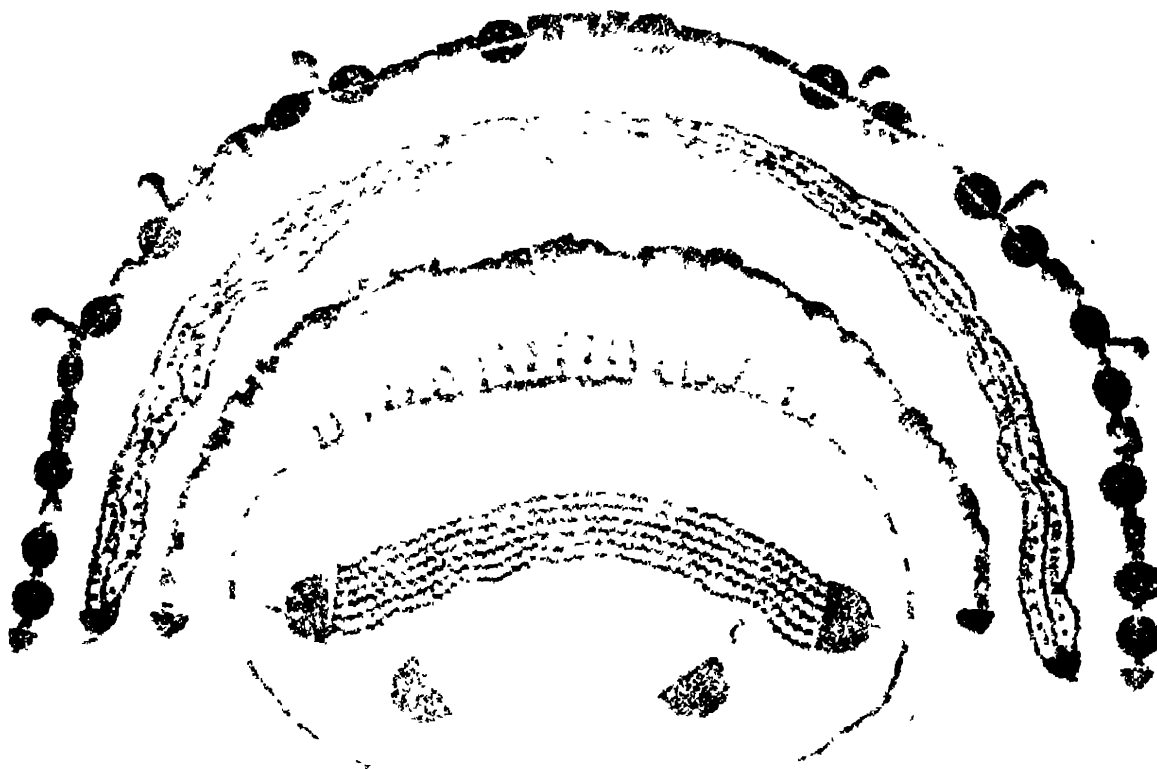
Unfortunately we have no written records about the Indus valley civilisation comparable to those we possess in respect of the others. A number of seals have been discovered with a few letters engraved on each, but these still remain undeciphered. We are therefore totally ignorant of the political history of the Indus valley and are not in a position to form an adequate idea of its culture and civilisation. We possess, at best, a vague and general idea of the subject which is entirely derived from a careful examination of the objects unearthed at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappā.

Mohenjo-Daro—Mound of the Dead—is the local name of a high mound situated in the plains of Larkana in a narrow strip of land between the main bed of the Indus river and the western Nara canal. The surrounding region is wonderfully fertile and is called even to-day Nakhlistān, or the "Garden of Sind". Here a city was built some five thousand years ago. This city was successively destroyed and rebuilt no less than seven times, the inundation of the Indus being perhaps the chief agency of destruction. The rebuilding did not always immediately follow the destruction, but sometimes the city remained in ruins for a considerable period before a new city rose upon them. Thus, after the foundation of the city, many centuries passed before it was finally abandoned.

enjoyed, to a degree unknown elsewhere in the ancient world, not only the sanitary conveniences but also the luxuries and comforts of a highly-developed municipal life. We must also conclude that the art of building had reached a high degree of perfection.

The People

The ruins of Mohenjo-Daro tell us a great deal about the people who lived in this luxurious city, and, as they afford us the first comprehensive view of the culture and civilisation of India, we



MOHENJO-DARO. JEWELLERY

must note the essential features of the social, economic and religious condition under appropriate heads or items.

Food. Wheat was the principal article of food, but barley and palm-date were also familiar. They also used mutton, pork, fish, and eggs.

Dress and ornaments. Cotton fabrics were in common use, but wool was also used, evidently for warm textiles. Ornaments were worn by both men and women of all classes. Necklaces, fillets, armlets, finger-rings and bangles were worn by both men and women; and girdles, nose-studs, ear-rings and anklets by women alone. There was great variety in the shape and design of these ornaments, and some of them are of singular beauty. These ornaments

were made of gold, silver, ivory, copper and both precious and semi-precious stones like jade, crystal, agate, carnelian, and *lapis lazuli*.

Household articles. The earthenware vessels, of rich variety, were made with the potter's wheel and were either plain or painted. In rare cases they were glazed. Vessels of copper, bronze, silver, and porcelain were known, though very rarely used. It is important to bear in mind that not a scrap of iron has been found, and that metal was obviously unknown.

Among other articles of domestic use may be mentioned spindles and spindle whorls made of baked earth, porcelain and shell; needles and combs, made of bone or ivory; axes, chisels, knives, sickles, fishhooks and razors made of copper and bronze; small cubical blocks of hard stone, probably used as weights.

The children's toys included, in addition to familiar articles, small wheeled carts and chairs, and we may easily infer that these were used in actual life. The discovery of dice-pieces shows the prevalence of that game.

Domesticated animals. The remains of skeletons prove that the humped bull, the buffalo, sheep, elephant and camel were domesticated. There are some doubts about the horse. The carvings of dogs on children's toys show that that animal was also familiar.

Weapons of War. These include axes, spears, daggers, maces and slings, with comparatively fewer specimens of bows and arrows. The absence of swords is significant. Shields, helmets or any other defensive armour are conspicuous by their absence. The weapons of war, all offensive in character, are usually made of copper and bronze, though a few stone implements have also been found.

Seals. More than five hundred seals have been discovered. These are made of terra cotta and small in size. Some contain fine representations of animal figures—both mythical and real—engraved on them. All of them contain a short record inscribed in a sort of pictorial writing which still remains undeciphered.

Fine Art. The representations of the animals carved on these seals often exhibit a high degree of excellence. A few stone images found at Harappā recall the finish and excellence of Greek statues and show a high degree of development in the sculptor's art.

Trade and Commerce. The seals were most probably used in connection with trade. Indeed there is abundant evidence that the people traded not only with other parts of India but also with many countries of Asia. It is certain that they secured tin, copper and precious stones from beyond India.

Arts and Crafts. Some aspects of the art and industry of the early Indus people have been dealt with above. Agriculture must have played an important part in the daily life of the common people, and among other things wheat, barley and cotton were cultivated on a large scale. Among the industrial classes, the potter, the weaver, the carpenter, the mason, the blacksmith, the goldsmith, the jeweller, the ivory-worker and stone-cutter were the most important.

A great advance in technical knowledge is indicated by the potter's wheel, kiln-burnt brick, the boring of hard substances like carnelian, and the casting and alloy of metals. A high aesthetic sense is indicated by the beautiful designs of ornaments, the superb relief figures on seals and the execution of fine stone statues.



SEAL. MOHENJO-DARO

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Religion. The objects found at Mohenjo-Daro also teach us something about the religious faiths and beliefs of the people. The cult of the Divine Mother seems to have been widely prevalent, and many figurines of this Mother-Goddess have come to light. This cult may not be exactly the same as the Śakti-worship of later days, but the fundamental ideas appear to be the same, viz., the belief in a female energy as the source of all creation.

Along with this, there was also a male-god who has been identified as the prototype of the God Śiva. On one particular seal, he seems to be represented as seated in the *Yoga* posture, surrounded by animals. He has three visible faces, and two horns on two sides of a tall head-dress. It is very interesting to note how this figure corresponds with, and to a certain extent explains, the later conception of Śiva. As is well known, Śiva is regarded as

a *Mahdyogin*, and is styled *Patupati* or the lord of beasts, his chief attributes being three eyes and the *Trisūla* or the trident. Now the apparent *Yoga* posture of the figure in Mohenjo-Daro justifies the epithet *Mahdyogin*, and the figures of animals round him explain the epithet *Patupati*. The three faces of the figure may not be unconnected with the later conception of three eyes, and the two horns with the tall head-dress might have easily given rise to the conception of a trident with three drongs.

The identification of the male-god with Śiva is further strengthened by the discovery of stone pieces which look exactly like a *Śiva-linga*, the form in which Śiva is almost universally worshipped to-day.

In addition to the worship of Śiva and Śakti, both in human and symbolic forms, we find the prevalence of that primitive religious faith which we call animism. It means worship of stones, trees and animals in the belief that these are abodes of spirits, good or evil. A natural corollary of this faith is the worship of *Nāgas*, *Yakshas*, etc., who are embodiments of these spirits. Clear traces of all these are found at Mohenjo-Daro.

It is obvious, therefore, that modern Hinduism, which possesses all the features mentioned above, was indebted, to a great extent, to the Indus-valley culture. Indications of the existence of the *Bhakti* cult (loving devotion to a personal God), and even of some philosophical doctrine like Metempsychosis, have also been found at Mohenjo-Daro. We must therefore hold that there is an organic relationship between the ancient culture of the Indus valley and the Hinduism of to-day.

General Conclusions

The study of the Indus-valley civilisation raises several interesting problems of a general nature. In the first place it offers a striking resemblance to the ancient civilisations in Sumer and Mesopotamia proper. The developed city-life, use of the potter's wheel, kiln-burnt bricks, and vessels made of copper and bronze, and, above all, the pictorial writings, are some of the common and distinctive features of all the three civilisations of the pre-historic period. The discovery of two seals of the Mohenjo-Daro type in Elam and Mesopotamia, and of a cuneiform inscription at Mohenjo-Daro, leaves no doubt that there was intercourse between these countries. The question therefore naturally arises, were these three civilisations developed independently, or was any of them an

offshoot of the other? To put the same thing in another form, did the civilisation spread from the Indus valley to the west or vice versa? Or are we to assume that the growth of civilisation in the Indus valley was uninfluenced in any way by the sister-civilisations in the west?

These and connected questions cannot be answered definitely. It will suffice to say that all the alternative hypotheses mentioned above have their supporters and opponents.

The next question, and one of greater practical importance, is the relationship of the Indus-valley culture with the Vedic civilisation of the Indo-Aryans, which is usually regarded as the source from which issued all the subsequent civilisations in India. On the face of it there are striking differences between the two. The Vedic Aryans were largely rural, while the characteristic features of the Indus-valley civilisation are the amenities of a developed city life. The former probably knew of iron and defensive armour, which are totally absent in the latter. The horse played an eminent part in the Vedic civilisation, but its early existence is doubted in the Indus valley. There were also important differences in respect of religious beliefs and practices. The Vedic Aryans worshipped the cow while the Indus people reserved their veneration for bulls. Not only do the Mother-Goddess and Śiva, the chief deities of the Indus valley, play but a minor part in the early *Veda*, but the latter, according to some interpreters, definitely condemns phallic worship. The worship of images was familiar in the Indus valley, but almost unknown to the Vedic Aryans.

In view of these striking dissimilarities, the Indus-valley civilisation is usually regarded as different from and anterior to the culture of the Vedic period. This also fits in well with the generally accepted chronological scheme. For, as noted above, the Indus-valley civilisation goes back to the third millennium B.C., while the date usually assigned to the *Rig-Veda* does not go beyond the second millennium B.C. But some would place the Vedic civilisation before that of the Indus valley and shift the date of the *Rig-Veda* to a period before 3000 B.C.

The question is not indeed free from difficulties. While the points of difference would undoubtedly incline us to the view that the Indus-valley civilisation and Vedic civilisation represent two different types of culture, the arguments for the priority of the one to the other are not conclusive. The reference to iron in the *Rig-Veda* would have indeed been a very strong argument for relegating the Vedic civilisation to a later period, but this is at best doubtful. As regards the other points, the data are not established

sufficiently well to warrant a definite conclusion. On the whole, however, the priority of the Indus-valley civilisation appears to be more probable, and at present holds the field.

Be that as it may, there is not the least doubt that we can no longer accept the view, now generally held, that Vedic civilisation is the sole foundation of all subsequent civilisations in India. That the Indus-valley civilisation described above has been a very important contributory factor to the growth and development of civilisation in this country admits of no doubt.

Lastly, there is the question of the race of the people among whom the Indus-valley civilisation grew. The preceding discussion would prepare us for some of the replies that have been given. Some hold that they were the same as the Sumerians, while others hold that they were Dravidians. Some again believe that these two were identical. According to this view, the Dravidians at one time inhabited the whole of India, including the Punjab, Sind and Baluchistān, and gradually migrated to Mesopotamia. The fact that the Dravidian language is still spoken by the Brahui people of Baluchistān is taken to lend strength to this view.

There is also a theory that the "Indus" people were Aryans, but this at present finds but few supporters. It is impossible to come to any definite conclusion on this point, and there is always the possibility that the people of the Indus valley might have belonged to an altogether separate race.

CHAPTER III

THE EARLY VEDIC AGE

Early Aryan Settlements

INDIA, as is well known, derives its name from the Sindhu (Indus), and the earliest civilisation of this country of which we have any definite trace had its cradle in the valley of the same river. We have seen in the last chapter that excavations at several places in the lower part of the valley have laid bare the ruins of well-built cities, and seals surprisingly similar to those discovered at Eshnunna, Kish and Ur in Mesopotamia, and assigned by archæologists to the third millennium B.C., have been found. The identity of the originators of this early Indus culture is uncertain. They appear to have professed a religion that was iconic and laid emphasis on the worship of the Mother-Goddess and a male deity who seems to have been the prototype of Śiva. The phallic cult was prevalent, but fire-pits were conspicuous by their absence..

Far different is the picture of another civilisation which had its principal home higher up the Indus valley. The people who evolved this culture called themselves *Āryas* or Aryans. Their earliest literature makes no reference to life in stately cities comparable to those whose remains have been unearthed at Harappā and Mohenjo-Daro. Their religion was normally aniconic,¹ and in their pantheon the female element was subordinated to the male, and the place of honour was given to deities like Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, the Nāsatyas, Sūrya, Agni (Fire) and other supernal beings who seem to have been quite unknown to the originators of the "Indus" culture as described in the last chapter. Unfortunately, the early literature of the *Āryas*—called the *Veda*—cannot be dated even approximately, and it is impossible to say with absolute precision in what chronological relation the civilisation portrayed in the *Veda* stood to the "Indus" culture of the third millennium B.C. Max Müller hesitatingly placed the beginning of the Vedic literature in the latter half of the second millennium B.C. Tilak and Jacobi, on the other hand, tried to push the date much farther back on astronomical grounds. But, as pointed out by several Indologists,

¹ i.e. in which images played no part.

astronomical calculations prove nothing unless the texts in question admit of unambiguous interpretation. Tilak himself points out how unsafe it is to act upon calculations based on loose statements in literature regarding the position of the heavenly bodies.

In the chaotic state of early Aryan chronology, it is a welcome relief to turn to Asia Minor and other countries in Western Asia and find in certain tablets of the fourteenth century B.C., discovered at Boghaz Keui and other places, references to kings who bore Aryan names and invoked the gods Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa and the Nāsatyas to witness and safeguard treaties. It is certain that the tablets belong to a period in the evolution of the Aryan religion when Indra, Varuṇa, and the other gods associated with them, still retained their early Vedic pre-eminence and had not yet been thrown into the shade by the Brāhmaṇic *Prajāpati* or the epic and Purāṇic *Trimūrti*.

Did the worshippers of Indra go from an earlier home in the Indus valley to Asia Minor or was the process just the reverse of this? In this connection it is interesting to note that in one passage of the *Rig-Veda* a worshipper invokes from his *pratna okas*, or ancient abode, the god Indra whom his ancestors formerly invoked. We are also told that Yadu and Turvaśa, two among the most famous Rig-Vedic tribes, were brought by Indra from a distant land. The former is in several passages brought into special relation with *Paśu* or *Parśu*, a name borne by the ancient people of Persia. The latter took part in a conflict with a king who is styled a *Pārthava*, a name that reminds us of Irān and is comparable to *Parśu* mentioned in connection with the Yadus. If the name *Harīyūpīyā*, which is the designation of a river or a city according to the commentators, and is associated with the mysterious people called Vṛichīvats who “broke the sacrificial vessels”, can be connected with Harappā, as has already been suggested by some, we have here an interesting glimpse of a period when that great centre of early Indus civilisation formed a battle-ground of fierce invaders exulting in the worship of Indra, clad in coats of mail (*varmīnaḥ*) and possessed of “prancing horses”, both of which the warriors of the lower Indus culture possibly lacked.

The Indra-worshipping tribes seem to have been divided into two rival groups. One of these included the Sṛiñjayas and their allies the Bharatas, both lauded by the priestly family of the Bhāradvājas. To the other group belonged the Yadus, Turvaśas, Druhyus, Anus and Pūrus who are found frequently in alliance with indigenous tribes. The first two tribes of the second group are branded as *Dāsas* in one passage of the *Rig-Veda*, and of the

remaining three, the Pūrus are styled *mṛidhravāchah*, "of hostile speech", an epithet otherwise applied only to the non-Aryan *Dasyus*.

Distinct from both these Indra-worshipping groups were the *Dāsas* proper or *Dasyus*, a dark-skinned, flat-nosed race who spoke a tongue unintelligible to the Aryans, possessed ferts and herds of cattle coveted by the new-comers, despised the sacrificial religion of the latter and possibly worshipped the phallus. This latter characteristic connects them with the men who evolved the pre-historic civilisation of the lower Indus valley.

It may be that the folk (*jana*) of the Bharatas represents an Aryan stock altogether different from that of the Yadu group. The memory of the migration of the Bharatas is not distinctly preserved in any of the hymns, while Yadus and Turvaśas are expressly mentioned as new arrivals. In the *Rig-Veda* Bharata princes are found sacrificing on the Drishadvatī, the Sarasvatī and the Āpayā, all rivers in the western part of the *Madhya-deśa*, far away from the north-west frontier. It is interesting to note that they are specially associated with the cult of Agni, the Fire-God, a deity conspicuous by his absence in the Boghaz Keui records of the fourteenth century B.C., and of whose worship no traces are found in the early ruins of Mohenjo-Daro.

The Bharatas were at first admittedly inferior to their foes and were "shorn of their possessions . . . but Vasishṭha became their family priest, and the people of the Trītsus prospered". Trītsu seems to have been the name of the ruling dynasty of the Bharatas, the most famous representatives of which were Divodāsa and his son or grandson Sudās. Opposed to the Trītsus and the allied tribe of the Sṛiñjayas stood the Yadus, Turvaśas, Druhyus, Anus and Pūrus.

It is clear that the Bharatas and their allies did not like the idea of being permanently "shorn of their possessions" by their enemies. The result was that the two rival groups of tribes engaged in a deadly struggle with one another. In one of these contests the Sṛiñjayas scattered the forces of the Turvasas and their allies the Vṛichivats. In another and a more famous conflict, known as the Battle of the Ten Kings, Sudās, the Trītsu king, defeated the hostile tribes, who were joined on the river Parushnī (Rāvi) by the Śivas, Pakthas and associate tribes from the north-west. The Bharatas now definitely established their pre-eminence among the Aryan folks, and a late Vedic text—the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*—refers to an old *gāthā* which describes "the greatness of the Bharatas neither the men before nor those after them attained".

More important than the internal conflicts of the Aryans were their struggles with the non-Aryans, which gradually led to a

considerable extension of the Aryan dominion towards the east. To Divodāsa belongs the credit of fighting against a *Dāsa* chieftain named Śambara. His policy was continued by Sudās who crushed a hostile combination of indigenous tribes on the banks of the Jumnā. Under the guidance of a priest named Viśvāmitra, the Bharatas even seem to have entertained designs against the Kikāṭas, a non-Aryan people traditionally associated with South Bihār. In the campaign against the *Dāsas*, the Bharatas were ably seconded by their rivals the Pūrus, one of whose kings bore the significant name of Trasadasyu, i.e. "terror to the Dasyus".

The geographical area eventually occupied by the R̥g-Vedic tribes is clearly indicated by the mention of certain rivers which permit of easy identification. The most important among these are the Kubhā (Kābul), the Suvāstu (Swāt), the Krumu (Kurram), the Gomatī (Gumal), the Sindhu (Indus), the Sushomā (Sohān), the Vitastā (Jhelum), the Asiknī (Chenāb), the Marudvṛidhā (Maruwardwan), the Parushnī (Rāvi), the Vipāś (Bias), the Śutudri (Sutlej), the Sarasvatī, the Dṛishadvatī (the Rakshi or Chitang), the Jumnā, the Gangā, and the Sarayū. The mention of these rivers implies the possession by the Aryans of a considerable portion of the country stretching from eastern Afghanistan to the upper valley of the Ganges. The major part of this area came to be known as *Sapta Sindhu*—the Land of the Seven Rivers. The whole of this extensive tract of land could not have been occupied entirely by Aryan tribes, because we hear also of the clans (*Viśah*) of the *Dāsas* who must have occupied some part at least of this territory, and whose supersession in any case must have been a slow and gradual process. Moreover, vast tracts of country were still covered with forest (*aranyānī*) or were altogether barren, containing only a few wells (*prapā*) here and there.

Political Organisation of the R̥g-Vedic Aryans

The basis of the political and social organisation of the R̥g-Vedic people was the patriarchal family. The successive higher units were styled *grāma*, *viś* and *jana*, and in some rare passages we even hear of aggregates of *janas*. The precise relationship between the *grāma*, the *viś* and the *jana* is nowhere distinctly stated. That the *grāma* was normally a smaller unit than either the *viś* or the *jana* appears probable from the fact that the *grāmanī*, the leader of the *grāma* (horde or village), who is usually a *Vaiśya*, is clearly inferior to the lord of the *viś* (*viśpati*) or the protector (*gopā*) of the *jana*, who is often the king himself.

It is more difficult to say in what relationship the *viś* stood to the *jana*. In some Vedic passages there is a clear contrast between the two, and Irānian analogies seem to suggest that the *viś* is a sub-division of a *jana*, if the latter may be taken as a parallel to the Irānian *Zantu*.

The prevailing form of government among the Ṛig-Vedic tribes was monarchical. But names applied in later ages to non-monarchical communities were also known. We have references to the *gaṇa* with the *gaṇapati* or *jyeshṭha* (elder) at its head. The mention of the term *jyeshṭha*, which corresponds to *jetṭhaka* of the Pāli texts, possibly points to some sort of organisation parallel to that of the well-known tribal republics of early Buddhist times.

The Ṛig-Vedic state (*rāshtra*) seems, however, to have been normally ruled by a potentate styled *rājan* (king) who was "without a rival and a destroyer of rivals". Kingship was usually hereditary. Thus the Pūrus and the Trītsus, two among the most famous of the Ṛig-Vedic clans, had as their rulers dynasties of princes, some of whose names are recorded in the *Ṛik-Saṁhitā*. Elective monarchies were perhaps not altogether unknown, though the *Ṛig-Veda* has no clear reference to them. In the *Atharva Veda* and the Great Epic, however, we have several explicit references to the election of the *rājan* to the kingship by the people, and in the *Ṛig-Veda* itself the need of the people's approval, if sovereignty is to be steady and unvacillating, is emphasised in the consecration hymns. In addition to the title *rājan* we come across the designation *samrāt*, which in later times undoubtedly meant a paramount ruler. In the *Ṛig-Veda*, however, there is no trace of any terrestrial kingship of the Mauryan or Gupta type, though the idea of a universal monarch (*viśvasya bhuvanasya rājā*) is met with.

The *rājan* occupied a position of pre-eminence in the tribe. He was formally consecrated to kingship and was marked out from the commonalty by his shining robes and the splendid palace where he lived, surrounded by his officers and retainers and lauded by priests and singers.

The foremost duty of the king was the protection of the tribe and the tribal territory. He fought against external enemies. He employed spies (*spāśa*) to watch over the conduct of the people who were apparently punished when they went wrong. He had to maintain a body of priests who performed the sacred rites and received a contribution (*bali*) from the people. The king was assisted by a number of functionaries of whom the most important was the *Purohita* or chaplain. The *Purohita* not only gave advice to the ruler, but used his spells and charms to secure the success

of his patron's arms and lauded his exploits when victory was won. Another important official was the *Senāni* or the leader of the army: About the organisation of the *Senā* or army which he led, our information is meagre. It must have included foot soldiers, later called *Patti*, as well as *Rathins* or warriors who fought from chariots. "Prancing horses" are also alluded to in certain battle songs. But the use of the elephant in war was as yet uncommon. Warriors of noble descent wore coats of mail, metal helmets, and hand-guards. The chief offensive weapon was the bow. Two kinds of arrows were used; one was poisoned and had a head of horn; the other was copper or iron-headed (*ayomukham*). Spears, swords and axes are also mentioned. We have also reference to the *pur charishnu* or moving fort which may have been an engine for assaulting strongholds. Banners were used in war, and musical instruments are mentioned. The army may have been divided into units termed *śardha*, *vrāta* and *gaṇa*, but the matter is obscure. *Kulapas* or heads of families fought under the banner of the *Vrājapati*, who is sometimes identified with the *Grāmanī*. The latter functionary was probably the head of the village both for civil and military purposes. Forts or strongholds were under the *Pūrpati*. The Vedic king had a system of espionage and also employed *dūtas* or messengers.

The *rājan*, though the lord of the people, did not govern without their consent. The business of the tribe was carried out in a popular assembly styled *Samiti*, at which princes and people were alike present. We have also references to another body, termed *Sabhā*, which some regard as a Council of Elders. Others think it was a village assembly or the place of meeting which also served as a centre for social gatherings. Certain passages of the *Rig-Veda* seem to connect the *Sabhā* with the men of wealth, opulence and goodly form, and this lends countenance to the view that in the main it functioned as a Council of Elders rather than an assembly of the whole tribe. Women at any rate were, according to a later Vedic text, excluded from the *Sabhā*. The *Sabhā* gave decisions regarding matters of public moment and, in later literature, figures prominently in connection with the administration of justice.

Social Life

(It has already been stated that the foundation of the political and social structure in the R̥g-Vedic age was the family. The members of a family lived in the same house. Houses in this age were presumably built of wood or reed. In every house there was a

fireplace (*agnishālā*), besides a sitting-room and apartments for the ladies. The master of the house was called *grihapati* or *dampati*. He was usually kind and affectionate, but occasional acts of cruelty are recorded. Thus we have the story of a father who blinded his son for his extravagance.

Families being patrilineal, people prayed for abundance of sons. The birth of daughters was not desired, but once born they were treated with kindness and consideration. Their education was not neglected, and some of them lived to compose hymns and rise to the rank of seers like Viśvavārā, Ghoshā and Apālā. Girls were given in marriage when they attained full development. Marriage for love as well as for money was known. Weddings were celebrated in the house of the bride's parents. Ordinarily a man married but one wife. Polygamy was, however, practised, but not polyandry. Remarriage of widows was permitted. Women were not independent persons in the eye of the law, and had to look to their male relations for aid and support. Their position in the household was one of honour. The term *dampati* is sometimes used to designate the mistress as well as the master of the house. The wife participated in the religious offerings of the husband and was the queen of his home. There is no evidence in the *Rig-Veda* of the seclusion of women, and ladies trooped to festal gatherings "decked, shining forth with sunbeams".

Particular attention was paid to dress and adornment. The Vedic costume seems to have consisted of three parts—an undergarment styled *nīvi*, a garment called *vāsa* or *paridhāna* and a mantle styled *adhivāsa*, *atka* or *drāpi*. The clothes were of different hues and were made of cotton, deer skin or wool. Garments were often embroidered with gold. The use of gold ornaments and of floral wreaths was common, especially on festive occasions. Both the sexes wore turbans. The hair was worn long and combed. The long locks of women were folded in broad plaits.

The daily fare of the Vedic household consisted mainly of parched grain, cakes (*apūpa*), milk and its various products such as curd and butter, and many sorts of vegetables and fruits. The use of animal food was common, especially at the great feasts and family gatherings. The slaying of the cow was, however, gradually looked upon with disfavour as is apparent from the name *aghnyā* (not to be killed) applied to it in several passages. Curiously enough, we have no reference to the use of salt in the *Rig-Veda*. Drinking water was obtained not only from rivers and springs (*utsa*), but also from *avatas* or artificial wells from which it was raised by a wheel of stone and poured into buckets of wood.

Reference is also made to more exhilarating drinks such as *Soma* and *Surā*. The former was the juice of a famous plant that grew on mountains, especially on the *Mūjavat* peak of the *Himālayas*. It was identical with the *Haoma* of the *Avesta*. Its use was restricted to religious ceremonies. On the other hand *Surā* was an ordinary intoxicating drink, the use of which was condemned in later ages.

The favourite amusements of the more virile classes were racing, hunting and the war-dance. The chariot-race was extremely popular and formed an important element of the sacrifice celebrated in later times as the *Vājapeya*. No less popular was hunting. The animals hunted were the lion, the elephant, the wild boar, the buffalo, and deer. Birds also were hunted. Another favourite pastime was dicing, which frequently entailed considerable loss to the gamester. Among other amusements, mention may be made of boxing, dancing and music. Women in particular loved to display their skill in dancing and singing to the accompaniment of lutes and cymbals. Lute-players played an important part in the development of the epic in later ages.

The Vedic singers loved to dwell on the joys of life and seldom referred to death except in the case of enemies. When a man died, he was either cremated or buried. The burning of widows does not appear to have been prevalent.

The Vedic *Kulas* or families were grouped into larger units in the formation of which *Varṇa* (colour) and *Sājātya* (kinship) played an important part. From the beginning, the white-hued (*śvītṛya*) Aryan invaders were marked out from their dark-skinned opponents, who were called *dāsa*, *dasyu* or *śūdra*. In the Aryan community itself men of kingly family (*rājanya* or *kshatra*) and descendants of priests (*Brāhmaṇas*) were clearly distinguished from the common free men, the *viś*. The quadruple division of society is mentioned in some of the earlier hymns, but it makes its formal appearance in the *Purushasūkta* which seeks to explain the existing divisions by adumbrating the theory that "when they divided the primeval being (*Purusa*) the *Brāhmaṇa* was his mouth, the *Rājanya* became his arms, the *Vaiśya* was his thighs, and from his feet sprang the *Śūdras*".

The social divisions mentioned here have their parallel in other Indo-European communities. But it is important to remember that in the hymns of the *Rig-Veda* there is little trace of the rigid restrictions typical of caste in its mature form. There was hardly any taboo on intermarriage, change of occupation or commensality. We have instances of marriages of *Brāhmaṇas* with *Rājanya* women, and of the union of *Ārya* and *Śūdra*. Families were not wedded to

a particular profession. "I am," says the author of a hymn, "a poet, my father is a doctor, and my mother is a grinder of corn. With our different views, seeking after gain, we run, as after cattle." There was no ban on the taking of food cooked by the *Śūdras*, and there is no evidence that impurity was communicated by the touch or contact of the inferior castes.

The rigid restrictions with regard to occupation, commensality, etc., originated, according to recent writers, not with the Aryans but with the totemistic proto-Australoid and the Austro-Asiatic inhabitants of pre-Dravidian India who dreaded the magical effects of the practice of strange crafts and the taking of tabooed food. A taboo on intermarriage is also traced to a similar source. The Aryan invader, with his ideas about colour and hypergamy, simply crystallised and perpetuated a system which was already in existence and was based on the taboo arising from magical ideas. Other factors, geographical, economic, and religious, have had their share in later developments.

In later ages, a member of each of the three higher castes, who wished to lead an ideal life, had to pass through the rigorous discipline of the *Āśramas* or the four stages of life. First he was a *brahmachārīn* or Vedic student vowed to chastity, then a *grihastha* or married householder, next a *vānaprastha* or forest hermit, and finally a *sannyāsin*, that is, an ascetic who had renounced the world. The germ of the system of *Āśrama* is already met with in the Vedic hymns. Besides the *grihapati*, we have reference to the *brahmachārīn*, as well as the *muni*. The *brahmachārīn* practised self-restraint and studied the sacred lore. "The master recited the texts and the disciple repeated them after him as frogs croak one after another." The *munis* are described as "long-haired, some were wind-clad, others wore a soiled garment of brown colour and led a life of wandering".

Economic Life

The R̥ig-Vedic Aryans were mostly scattered in villages. The word *nagara* (city) does not occur in the hymns. We find indeed mention of *purs* which were occasionally of considerable size and were sometimes made of stone (*aśmamayī*) or of iron (*āyasī*). Some were furnished with a hundred walls (*śatabhuji*). But the *purs* were in all probability rather ramparts or forts than cities, and served as places of refuge, particularly in autumn, as is suggested by the epithet *Śārādī* applied to them in some passages. It is significant that, unlike the later texts, the *R̥ig-Veda* makes no clear mention of individual cities like *Āsandivat* or *Kāmpila*.

Regarding the organisation of the village we have a few details. There was an official styled the *Grāmanī* who looked after the affairs of the village, both civil and military. We have also reference to a functionary called *Vrājapati* who may have been identical with the *Grāmanī*, and who led to battle the various *Kulapas* or heads of families.

Homestead and arable lands in the village appear to have been owned by individuals or families, while grass lands (*khilya*) were probably held in common.

Agriculture was the principal occupation of the village folk. The importance of the art of tilling is clearly brought out by the name *Kṛishṭi* or *Charshani* (agriculturist) which is applied to people in general, and in particular to the five principal tribes into which the early Vedic community was divided. Cultivated fields were known as *Urvarā* or *Kshetra*. They were often watered by irrigation canals. The use of manure was also known. The grain grown on the soil was styled *dhāna* or *yava*, but the exact significance of these terms in the earliest literature is not known. In later times they meant rice and barley. When ripe, they were cut with a sickle, tied in bundles and threshed on the floor of the granary. They were next winnowed, ground in the mill and made into cakes (*apūpa*).

The rearing of cattle and other domestic animals was scarcely less important than agriculture. Cows were held in much esteem, and milk, as we have seen, formed an important part of the dietary in the Vedic household. Herds of cattle were daily led to the pasture by the *gopa* (cowherd). The valley of the *Yamunā* was especially famous for its wealth of kine. The marking of the ears of cattle was a common practice, as is shown by the use of the expression *ashtakarnī* (having pierced ears or having the sign of 8 marked on the ear) to mean a cow.

Other useful animals were the draught-ox, the horse, the dog, the goat and the sheep. The ewes of the land of Gandhāra were famous for their wool.

Though mainly an agricultural and pastoral people, the Vedic tribes were not indifferent to trade and industry. Commerce was largely in the hands of a people styled *Pani*, who were probably non-Aryans and whose niggardliness was proverbial, but amongst them we have reference also to bountiful merchants like *Bṛibu*. Trade probably consisted mainly of barter. The chief articles of trade, judging by the evidence of the later *Samhitās*, were clothes, coverlets and skins. The standard unit of value was the cow, but necklets of gold (*nishka*) also served as a means of exchange. Whether *nishkas* in the early period possessed all the characteristic

marks of a regular coinage, is a highly debatable question. No gold coin of the old indigenous type has yet been discovered in India, but the transition to the use of coined money was clearly prepared by the *nishka*, which was a piece of metal that came to possess a definite weight, if not the hall-mark of State authority. We have also in the *Rig-Veda*, in an enumeration of gifts, reference to the golden *manā* which some authorities identify with the old Babylonian weight-unit, the *manah* (Latin *Mina*).

The principal means of transport by land were chariots (*ratha*) and wagons (*anas*), the former usually drawn by horses and the latter by oxen. The epithet *pathi-krit*, "path-maker", applied to the Fire-God, suggests that the services of the deity were frequently requisitioned to burn the primeval forests, infested by wild animals and haunted by highwaymen (*taskara*, *stenu*), to make roads for the use of travellers and merchants.

A great controversy has centred round the question as to whether marine navigation was practised in Rig-Vedic times. According to one view, navigation was limited to the crossing of rivers in boats, but we have undoubted references to navigators sailing in ships with a hundred oars. In the story of the shipwreck of Bhujyu, mention is made of the *Samudra*, "which giveth no support, or hold, or station". Some think that *Samudra* means no more than the stream of the Indus in its lower course. Others regard the story as a matter of hearsay knowledge gathered from travellers, but acquaintance with the sea is rendered probable by references to the "treasures of the deep". If the identification of the Vedic *manā* with the Babylonian *manah* is correct, we have indubitable testimony to a very early intercourse between Vedic India and distant lands beyond the seas.

Of the industries of the Rig-Vedic period, those of the wood-worker, the metal-worker, the tanner, the weaver and the potter deserve special mention. The wood-worker or carpenter not only made chariots, wagons, houses and boats, but showed his skill in carved work of a finer type such as artistic cups. The metal-worker or smith fashioned all sorts of weapons, implements and ornaments from various kinds of metal including gold and the mysterious *ayas*, which some authorities take to mean copper or bronze while others favour the sense of iron. Workers in leather made water-casks, bow-strings, slings and hand-guards for the protection of the archers. Weavers included men as well as women. The latter showed their skill in sewing, weaving and the plaiting of mats from grass or reeds. The potter (*Kulāla*) also plied his craft for the benefit of the people.

Arts and Sciences

The art of poetry was in full bloom as is evidenced by the splendid collection of lyrics known as the *Rik-Saṁhitā* which consists of hymns in praise of different gods. The number of hymns is 1,017. These are grouped into books termed *ashtakas* or *maṇḍalas* containing eight and ten hymns respectively, which were recited by priests styled *hotris* or reciters. The old hymns are chiefly to be found in the so-called Family Books (II-VII), each of which is ascribed by tradition to a particular family of seers (*rishis*). Their names are Gṛtsamada, Viśvāmitra, Vāmadeva, Atri, Bharadvāja and Vasishṭha. Book VIII is ascribed to the Kanvas and Angirases. Book IX is dedicated to *Soma*. The latest parts of the collection are to be found in Books I and X, which, however, contain some old hymns as well.

Fine specimens of lyric poetry are to be found among the Ṛig-Vedic hymns, notably in those addressed to the Goddess of the Dawn.

A knowledge of the art of writing has been deduced from references to *ashtakarnī* cows, where the epithet *ashta-karnī* is interpreted to mean "having the sign for the number 8 marked on the ear". But the expression admits of other interpretations. The prevailing view has been that the Ṛig-Vedic people did not possess the art of writing, and that the old script in which the inscriptions of Aśoka and his successors are written goes back to a Semitic, and not Vedic Aryan, origin. Writing was no doubt practised by the pre-historic people of the Indus valley who developed the ancient culture of Harappā and Mohenjo-Daro, but it is significant that the early literature of the Aryans was transmitted orally.

Architecture made some advance in Ṛig-Vedic India. There are references to mansions supported by a thousand columns and provided with a thousand doors. Mention is also made of stone castles and structures with a hundred walls. Allusions to images of Indra possibly point, according to some, to the beginnings of sculpture.

The medical art of the age distinguished quite a number of diseases. But the physician (*bhishaj*) was still a fiend-slayer as well as a healer of disease, and charms and spells were regarded as equally efficacious with healing herbs and drugs. The use of iron legs as a substitute for natural ones points, however, to some advance in surgery. The science of astronomy made definite progress, and certain stars had already been observed and named.

Religion

The early Vedic religion has been designated by the name of henotheism or kathenotheism—a belief in single gods, each in turn standing out as the highest. It has also been described as the worship of Nature leading up to Nature's God. The chief deities of the earlier books owe their origin to the personification of natural phenomena. Abstract deities like *Dhātṛi*, the Establisher; *Vidhātṛi*, the Ordainer; *Viśvakarman*, the All-Creating, and *Prajāpati*, the Lord of Creatures, *Śraddhā*, Faith; *Manyu*, Wrath, make their appearance at a later stage. Besides the higher Gods, lauded by priests, we have reference to others whose worship was not countenanced in orthodox circles. Some scholars find in the hymns traces of the cult of the *liṅga*, and even of *Krishṇa*. *Śiva* occurs as an epithet of the god *Rudra* worshipped by the Vedic priests. The *Krishṇa* mentioned in *Rig-Vedic* hymns can hardly be identified with his epic and Purāṇic namesake, as the river with which he is associated in the *Rig-Veda* is not the *Jumnā* but some stream in the Kuru country, as we learn from the *Bṛihaddevatā*.

Father *Dyaus* (Zeus, Diespiter), the Shining God of Heaven, and Mother *Prithivī*, the Earth Goddess, are among the oldest of the Vedic deities, but the hymns scarcely reflect their former greatness. They have been cast into the shade by *Varuṇa*, the Encompassing Sky, and *Indra*, the God of Thunder and Rain. *Varuṇa* is the most sublime deity of the early Vedic pantheon. He bears the epithet *Asura* (Avestan *Ahura*) and he is the great upholder of physical and moral order, *Rita*, the idea of which is at least as old as the fourteenth century B.C., as we learn from inscriptions mentioning the names of the Mitanni kings. To *Varuṇa* people turned for forgiveness of sin just as they did to *Vishṇu* in a later age.

“If we have sinned against the man who loves us, have ever wronged a brother, friend, comrade,

The neighbour ever with us, or a stranger, O *Varuṇa*, remove from us the trespass.

“O *Varuṇa*, whatever the offence may be which we as men commit against the heavenly host,

When through our want of strength we violate thy laws, punish us not, O God, for that iniquity.”

The worship of *Varuṇa*, with its consciousness of sin and trust in the divine forgiveness, is undoubtedly one of the first roots of the later doctrine of *Bhakti*.

If Varuṇa is the sovereign of the Universe and the guardian of the moral laws, Indra is the puissant God of war, the lightning-wielder, who

“ . . . slew the serpent, then discharged the waters,
And cleft the caverns of the lofty mountains”,
“ . . . made all earthly things unstable,
Who humbled and dispersed the Dāsa colour,
Who, as the player's stake the winning gambler,
The foemen's fortune gains. . . .”

Indra came to occupy the chief place among the Vedic gods, while Varuṇa receded to the background and became merely the Lord of Waters, a sort of Indian Neptune.

Closely connected with Varuṇa is Mitra, the friend, the personification of the sun's beneficent agency, and the two belonged to the class of deities styled *Āditya*, sons of Aditi, the Goddess of Eternity. Other important deities of the upper realm of light are *Sūrya*, the Illuminator; *Savitṛi*, the Enlivener; *Pūshan*, the Nourisher; *Vishṇu Urukrama*, the wide-striding Sun; the *Aśvins* or the *Nāsatyas*, perhaps the Morning and Evening Stars, later the gods of healing, parallel to the *Dioscuri*, and *Ushas*, the lovely Goddess of the Dawn.

Between the world of light above and the earth below lies the realm of the air, and the chief deities of this region are, besides Indra, the *Maruts* (Storm Gods), *Vāyu* and *Vāta* (the Wind Gods), *Rudra* (the Howling God of Storm and Lightning), and *Parjanya* (the God of Rain). Of the terrestrial deities, the chief are Agni, Soma and Sarasvatī. Agni, or the Fire-God, received special homage because no sacrifice could be performed without offerings to him. The libation of *Soma* was also regarded as specially sacred. *Sarasvatī* was a river deity who came to be regarded later as the Goddess of Learning. Of the three principal deities of the later mythology, Vishṇu and Rudra (Śiva) are, as we have seen already, known to the *Rig-Veda*, and Brahmā, though not explicitly mentioned, has his precursors in Vidhātṛi (the Ordainer), Hiraṇyagarbha (the Germ of Gold), Prajāpati (the Lord of Creatures) and Brahmanaspati (the Lord of Prayer).

An important characteristic of Vedic Mythology is the predominance of the male element. Goddesses like Prithivī, Aditi, Ushas, and Sarasvatī occupy a very subordinate position. In this respect the Vedic civilisation presents a contrast to the prehistoric culture of the Indus valley, where the Mother Goddess is co-equal with her male partner.

Another important feature of the Vedic religion is the tendency towards monotheism and even monism. The hymns foreshadow the idea of universal unity, and express the belief that God is One although he bears many names.

“They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna,
And Agni; he is the heavenly bird Garutmat:
To what is One, the poets give many a name,
They call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.”

The monotheistic conception appears more prominently in the hymns addressed to Hiranyagarbha (the Gold Germ), and to Viśvakarman (the All-Creating),

“Who is our Father, our Creator, Maker,
Who every place doth know and every creature,
By Whom alone to gods their names were given,
To Him all other creatures go, to ask Him.”

Finally, we have a song of Creation according to which in the beginning

“ . . . neither death nor deathlessness existed;
Of day and night there was yet no distinction.
Alone that One breathed calmly, self-supported,
Other than It was none, nor aught above It.”

Sacrifices occupy a prominent place in the Vedic ritual. These include offerings of milk, grain, *ghee*, flesh and juice of the Soma plant. The use of material objects as symbols of deities was perhaps not altogether unknown, and one passage apparently makes a reference to an image or symbol of Indra. The symbol of phallic worship is, as we have seen, detected by some in the allusions to the *Śiśnadevas*.

Regarding life after death, the R̥g-Vedic hymns have no consistent theory. According to some passages, the dead dwell in the realm of Yama, the beneficent king of the departed. The idea of metempsychosis is, however, not yet developed.

CHAPTER IV

LATER VEDIC CIVILISATION

Aryan Expansion

WE have seen that in the Rig-Vedic period the Aryan tribes had spread over the whole country from the Kābul to the upper Ganges, and had built up small kingdoms mostly under hereditary monarchs who held their own against the non-Aryan peoples by whom they were surrounded. But internecine strife in which some of the tribes engaged even in Rig-Vedic times produced far-reaching results. Some of the weaker tribes were absorbed by their more powerful neighbours, and the increase in the wealth and territory of the conquering tribes was reflected in the growth of the power of the kings, who governed large and compact kingdoms. Stately cities made their appearance for the first time in the later Vedic texts.

Simultaneously with the growth of large kingdoms, we have a further extension of the political and cultural sway of the Aryans towards the east and the south. This was due as much to the adventurous spirit of kings and princes as to the desire of the priests to cause *Agni*, the Fire-God, to taste new lands through sacrifices. Before the close of the later Vedic period, the Aryans had thoroughly subdued the fertile plains watered by the Jumnā, the upper Ganges and the *Sadānīrā* (the Rāptī or the Gaṇḍak). Adventurous bands penetrated into the Vindhyan forest and established powerful kingdoms in the Deccan to the north of the Godāvari.

The centre of the Aryan world was the "firm middle country" (*dhruvā madhyamā diś*) stretching from the Sarasvatī to the Gangetic Doāb and occupied by the Kurus, the Pañchālas and some adjoining tribes. It was from this region that Brāhmanical civilisation spread to the outer provinces, to the land of the Kosalas and the Kāsis drained by the *Sarayū* and the *Varanāvātī*, to the swamps east of the Gaṇḍak colonised by the Videhas, and to the valley of the Wardha occupied by the Vidarbhas. Beyond them lived the tribes of mixed origin like the Aṅgas of East Bihār and the

Magadhas of South Bihār, as well as *Dasyus* or aboriginal folk like the Pundras of North Bengal, the Pulindas and Śavaras of the Viudhyān forest, and the Andhras in the valley of the Godāvarī.

The most distinguished among the tribes of the period were at first the Kurus and the Pañchālas with their capitals at Āsandivat and Kāmpila (Kāmpilya) respectively. The former occupied Kurukshetra—the tongue of land between the Sarasvatī and the Drishadvatī (Chitang-Rakshi)—as well as the districts of Delhi and Meerut. The latter occupied the Bareilly, Budāūn and Farrukhābād districts of the United Provinces and some adjoining tracts. The Kuru nation was probably formed by the amalgamation of several smaller tribes including a section of the Pūrus and the Bharatas, while the Pañchālas sprang from an obscure R̥g-Vedic tribe known as the Krivis, with whom were associated the Śrījāyas and the Purvaśas.

The later Vedic texts mention powerful Kuru kings like Balhika-Pratīpāya, Parikshit and Janamejaya, all of whom figure prominently in epic legends. Parikshit is the hero of a famous song of praise found in the *Atharva Veda*. It describes him as a universal king (*rājā viśvajanīna*) and his kingdom as flowing with milk and honey. His son Janamejaya is credited with having gone round the earth completely conquering on every side. His successors were not so powerful as he was. They sustained disasters and were finally obliged to fly from Kurukshetra. According to later tradition a scion of the Kuru race transferred his residence to Kauśāmbī (Kosam, near Allahābād) and ruled over a powerful kingdom which survived till the rise of Buddhism.

The Pañchālas also produced conquering kings who engaged in wars and alliances with the Kurus. But their chief title to fame rests on their land being the home of theologians and philosophers like king Pravāhana-Jaivali and the sages Āruṇi and Śvetaketu.

In the time of the Upanishads the fame of the land of the Pañchālas as a centre of Brāhmanical learning was eclipsed by the country of the Videhas, whose king Janaka, the patron of Yājñavalkya, won the proud title of *Samrāt*. He gathered the celebrities of the Kuru-Pañchāla countries at his court “much as the intellects of Athens gathered at the Court of Macedonian princes”. The Videhan monarchy fell shortly before the rise of Buddhism, and its overthrow was followed by the rise of the Vajjian Confederacy.

Growth of Royal Power and Elaboration of the Administrative Machinery

The amalgamation of tribes and the increase in the size of kingdoms in the later Vedic age, coupled with the successful leadership of the kings in war, inevitably led to a growth in the royal power. Kings now claimed to be absolute masters of all their subjects, excepting perhaps the Brāhmaṇas who proclaimed Soma to be their king. But even the Brāhmaṇas were "liable to removal at will". The common free men had to pay tribute (*bali*, *śulka* and *bhāga*) and could be "oppressed at will", while the members of the servile classes were liable to be "expelled and slain at will".

The chief functions of the king were of a military and judicial character. He was the protector of his people and the laws, and the destroyer of their enemies. Himself immune from punishment, he wielded the rod of chastisement (*daṇḍa*).

Successful monarchs set up claims to the rank of universal king (*rājā viśvajanīna*), lord of all the earth (*sarvabhūmi*) or sole ruler (*ekarāt*) of the land down to the seas, and celebrated sacrifices befitting their status like the *Rājasūya* (royal consecration), the *Vājapeya* (drink of strength) and *Aśvamedha* (horse-sacrifice). The *Rājasūya* included offerings to divinities in the houses of officials, styled *ratnins*, and a formal *abhisheka* or besprinkling by the priest, besides certain popular rites such as a cow raid, a sham fight and a game of dice in which the king is made to be the victor. The most interesting feature of the *Vājapeya* rites was a chariot-race in which the sacrificer was allowed to carry off the palm. This was followed by homage to Mother Earth and a formal enthronement. In the *Aśvamedha* ceremonial, a horse was set free to roam abroad under the guardianship of youths of rank who were fully armed. If the period of wandering were successfully passed, the steed was sacrificed. The features of the rite included a circle of tales narrated by a priest, and laudatory verses sung by a lute-player.

While the kings of the middle country were generally content with the title of *rājā*, rulers in the outlying parts of India preferred other designations. The eastern kings were styled *Samrāt*, the southerners *Bhoja*, those in the west *Svarāt*, while the rulers of the northern realms (*janapadas*) were called *Virāt*. The association of the *Samrāt*, whose status was now regarded as higher than that of the *rājan*, with the east is important. It probably points to the growth of imperialism in the east—a tendency that became more marked in the early days of Buddhism.

The king was usually, though not invariably, a Kshatriya. The office of monarch now, as before, was normally hereditary, though cases of election by the people were probably not rare, as is apparent from the coronation songs of the *Atharva Veda*. But popular choice seems to have been generally limited to members of the royal family.

The royal claim to absolutism did not pass unchallenged. The ceremonial of consecration included certain rites which required the king to descend from the throne and make obeisance to the Brāhmaṇas. He had also to take an oath not to play false to the priest, and was specially charged with the duty of protecting the Brāhmaṇas and the laws of the realm. That the Brāhmaṇas did not tamely acquiesce in all that the king did, appears from several stories about the conflict of kings and Brāhmaṇas recorded in the later Vedic texts. As to the commonalty, they supplied important officials like the *Sūta* and the *Grāmanī*, whose title *rājā karṭṛi* or "king-maker" indicated their importance in the body politic. The popular assemblies styled the *Sabhā* and the *Samiti* were still regarded as important, and it is stated in the *Atharva Veda* that concord between the king and the assembly was essential for the former's prosperity. Popular wrath vented itself in the expulsion of tyrannical kings together with erring officials.

With the growth of royal power came an elaboration of the machinery of administration. In the Rig-Vedic period we have, barring the *Purohita* (chaplain), scarcely any reference to a purely civil functionary among the higher officials of the king. But in the later Vedic texts we come across the *Samgrahitṛi* (treasurer), the *Bhāgadugha* (collector of taxes), the *Sūta* (royal herald, bard or charioteer), the *Kshattṛi* (Chamberlain), the *Akshāvāpa* (superintendent of gambling), the *Go-vikartana* (king's companion in the chase), the *Pālāgala* (courier), in addition to the older ecclesiastical and military officials like the *Purohita* (chaplain), the *Senānī* (general) and the *Grāmanī* (leader of the host or of the village). Mention is also made of the generic title *Sachiva* applied to ministers in later ages. The references to the *Samgrahitṛi* and the *Bhāgadugha*, coupled with the mention of regular contributions from the people in the shape of *bali* and *śulka*, point to important developments in the system of taxation and revenue administration.

The beginnings of a regular system of provincial government may be traced in references to the *Sthapati* and the *Satapati*. The former was apparently charged with the duty of administering outlying areas often inhabited by aboriginal tribes, while the latter probably looked after a group of a hundred villages and was

the precursor of the long chain of rural officials mentioned in the law-books. On the lowest rung of the ladder stood the village officials (*adhikṛita*) appointed by the king himself according to the *Prasna Upanishad*. Regarding police arrangements, we know very little. Some find a reference to police officials in the *Jīvagṛibh* of the R̥ig-Veda and the *Ugras* of the Upanishads. But the matter is not free from doubt.

The king had a very large part in the administration of justice, but power was sometimes delegated to *Adhyakshas* or overseers. Certain cases were referred to the tribe for adjudication. The judicial work of the tribal assembly was usually entrusted to a small body of *Sabhāsads* or assessors. Petty cases in the village were decided by the *Grāmyavādin* or village judge and his court (*Sabhā*). The use of Ordeal as a part of judicial procedure was not unknown. Civil cases were sometimes decided by arbitration, and private vengeance in criminal cases was still recognised.

Social Changes

Little change can be traced in the mode of house-building and the style of dress. In regard to dietary, the eating of meat was being looked upon with disfavour. New forms of social entertainment had come into existence. We have references to the *Śailūsha* or actor, and *gāthās* or verses were sung by the lute-players (*vīṇāgāthin*) at great public festivals to the accompaniment of musical instruments which were sometimes furnished with a hundred strings (*śata-tantu*). Such *gāthās* foreshadow the "songs of victory" which developed into the Great Epic.

In regard to the position of women, there was hardly any improvement. Daughters were regarded as a source of misery. Women could not go to the tribal council or assembly (*Sabhā*), neither could they take an inheritance. Married women of the upper classes had often to suffer the presence of rival wives. The lot of queens was specially unenviable in this respect. While some of them, e.g. the *mahishī* or chief queen, and the *vāvātā* or the favourite, were loved and honoured, others like the *parivṛikti* were admittedly neglected. But they continued to have their share in religious rites. The education which some of them received was of a high order, as it enabled them to take a prominent part in philosophical disputations at royal courts. The rules of marriage underwent a change towards greater rigidity, and there were instances of child marriage.

As regards class distinction, changes of far-reaching importance

were taking place. The two higher classes, namely the Brāhmaṇa and the Kshatriya, enjoyed privileges denied to the Vaiśya and the Śūdra. The latter could be "oppressed at will". Different modes of address were laid down for the four castes. Change of caste was becoming difficult, if not impossible, but the higher classes were still free to intermarry with the lower orders, though marriage with Śūdras was not much approved. The life of a member of the higher castes was now rigidly regulated. The *Chāndogya Upanishad* makes pointed reference to three stages, that of the householder engaged in sacrifice, study and charity, that of the hermit who practised austerity, and that of the Brahmachārin who dwelt with his *Āchārya* or teacher. The power and prestige of the Brāhmaṇas had increased immensely. But though the priest claimed to be a god on earth and the protector of the realm, and the same individual might be the *Purohita* of several kingdoms, there was no pope to oppose the king. The Brāhmaṇa claim to supremacy was now and then contested by the Kshatriya, and we have declarations to the effect that the Kshatriya had no superior and that the priest was only a follower of the king. The great community of ordinary freemen was splitting up into small functional groups and we have references, in addition to those engaged in agricultural and pastoral pursuits, to the merchant, the chariot-maker, the smith, the carpenter, the tanner, the fisherman, etc., as names of distinct castes. Some of them were sinking in social estimation, and in a Brāhmaṇa passage a carpenter's touch is said to impart ceremonial impurity. The Śūdra, too, was regarded as impure and was not allowed to touch the milk needed for oblations to the Fire-God. The gulf separating him from the humbler freeman was, however, becoming narrower. He was not infrequently grouped with the Vaiśya, and the two together were set against the priest and the noble. The right of the Śūdra to live and prosper was gradually recognised and prayers were even uttered for his glory. The ranks of Śūdras were constantly swelled by the admission of new aboriginal tribes into the Aryan polity.

Outside the regular castes stood two important bodies of men, namely, the *Vrātyas* and the *Nishādas*. The *Vrātyas* were probably Aryans outside the pale of Brāhmaṇism. They did not observe Brāhmaṇic rules, spoke some Prākritic language and led a nomadic life. They appear to have had some special connection with the people of Magadha and the cult of Śiva and of the "Arhats". They were permitted to become members of the Brāhmaṇical community by the performance of some prescribed rites.

The *Nishādas* were clearly a non-Aryan people who lived in their own villages and had their own rulers (*Sthapati*). They were probably identical with the modern Bhils.

Economic Condition

The people, including even men of wealth, still lived mostly in villages, but the amenities of city life were no longer unknown. In certain villages peasant proprietors, working in their own fields, were being replaced by a class of landlords who obtained possession of entire villages. Transfer of land, however, did not meet with popular approval during this epoch, and allotments could only be made with the consent of clansmen.

Agriculture continued to be one of the principal occupations of the people. Considerable improvement was effected in agricultural implements, and new kinds of grain and fruit trees were grown on the soil. But the cultivator was not free from trouble, and an *Upanishad* passage refers to a hailstorm or a swarm of locusts that sadly afflicted the land of the Kurus and forced many people to leave the country. Trade and industry flourished. A class of hereditary merchants (*vāṇija*) came into being. There was inland trade with the Kirātas inhabiting the mountains, who apparently exchanged the drugs which they dug up on the high ridges for clothes, mattresses, and skins. The sea was known intimately, and the mention of the legend of the flood in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is taken by some authorities to point to intercourse with Babylon. Commerce was facilitated by the use of convenient units of value like the *nishka*, the *śatamāna*, and the *kṛishṇala*, but it is doubtful if these had acquired all the characteristics of a regular coinage. The *nishka*, formerly a necklet, was now probably a lump of gold possessing a definite weight equal to three hundred and twenty *ratis* (1 *rati* = 18 grams), which was also the weight of a *śatamāna*. A *kṛishṇala* weighed one *rati*, that is, 1·8 grains. Merchants were probably organised into guilds, as appears from references to *gaṇas* or corporations and the *śreshṭhins* or aldermen.

The variety of industrial occupations was remarkable. Specialisation had gone far. The chariot-maker was distinguished from the carpenter, the maker of the bows from the maker of the bow-strings and of arrows, the tanner from the hide-dresser or furrier. Women took part in industrial life as makers of embroidered garments, workers in thorns, dyers, etc.

Religious Development •

Great changes took place in the religious life of the people. The lustre of the older gods was gradually dimmed, though one would still find, here and there, especially in the *Atharva Veda*, magnificent hymns celebrating the omniscience of *Varuṇa* or the beneficence of the Earth-Goddess. The sacrificial side of religion was greatly developed by the priests, while the popular superstitious belief in spirits, imps, spells, incantations and witchcraft found a place in the sacred canon. The monotheistic and monistic tendencies, that showed themselves prominently towards the close of the R̥g-Vedic period, became more marked with the efflux of time. *Prajāpati*, the lord of created beings, cast all the older deities into the shade. The germ of the later doctrine of the *Avatāras*, or divine “descents” or incarnations, can be traced in stories about *Prajāpati* assuming the form of a boar to raise the earth from the primeval waters and becoming a tortoise when about to create offspring. While the priests and the theologians were absorbed in elaborate sacrificial rites and muttered litanies in honour of *Prajāpati*, the First Sacrificer and the Embodiment of Sacrifice, philosophers threw doubts on the efficacy of ritual, speculated about the underlying unity of the universe, and strove for union with the supreme *Brahman* or *Paramātman*, the universal Soul or the Absolute “that dwelleth in every thing, that guideth all beings within, the Inward Guide, Immortal”.

The common people, however, did not understand abstruse theological or philosophical speculations and began to show predilection for certain deities already known to the *R̥g-Veda* but not so prominent as *Indra* or *Varuṇa*. One of them was *Rudra*, who already bore in the early litanies the epithet of *Śiva* (propitious) and soon came to be regarded as the Great God (*Mahādeva*) and the lord of animate beings (*Paśupati*). His popularity may have been due to his identification with the chief male deity of the pre-historic people of the Indus.

Side by side with *Rudra* arose another figure—*Vishnu*, a solar deity famed in the *R̥g-Veda* for his three strides. As the source of cosmic and moral order, the deliverer of mankind in distress and saviour of the Gods, *Vishnu* soon came to occupy the place of *Varuṇa* as the most sublime among the celestials, and his highest step (*paramampadam*) became the goal of sages and seers. Before the final close of the Vedic canon, he came to be identified with *Vāsudeva*—a hero or demi-god known to epic tradition as *Kṛishṇa-Devakiputra*. In one Upanishad we find *Kṛishṇa* associated with

a school of thought that rejected the purely ritualistic interpretation of sacrifice and considered the practice of virtue to be as effective as gifts to priests. In the final hour one should, according to this school, take refuge in these three thoughts: "You are the imperishable, the never-falling and the very essence of life." The goal of spiritual endeavour according to them, was the realm of light higher than heaven where dwelleth the God among the gods. Here we see the germ of some of the doctrines that received a more systematic treatment in later ages and lay at the root of the Bhāgavata creed.

Literature and Science

Before the close of the Vedic period, the Aryans possessed an extensive literature handed down in the Brāhmaṇical schools by memory. Some idea of the wide range of subjects in which the people interested themselves may be obtained from several lists given in the *Upanishads*. One such list makes mention not only of the *Vedas* but of *Itihāsa-purāṇa* (legend and ancient lore), *Pitṛya* (the science relating to the Manes), *Rāśi* (mathematics), *Daiva* (knowledge of portents), *Nidhi* (chronology), *Vākovākya* (dialectics), *Ekāyana* (ethics), *Deva-vidyā* (etymological interpretation of divine names), *Brahmavidyā* (knowledge of the Absolute), *Bhūtavidyā* (demonology, or science of elements), *Kshatra vidyā* (the military science), *Nakshatra vidyā* (astronomy), *Sarpa vidyā* (the science of snakes), and *Devajana vidyā* (dancing and music or mythology). Another list mentions the *Vedas*, phonetics (*śikshā*), ritual (*kalpa*), grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), etymology (*nirukta*), metrics (*chhandas*) and astronomy (*jyotiṣa*). If all the subjects mentioned in the former list were dealt with in special treatises, most of them have not come down to us. A brief account of the extant works of Vedic literature included in the second list is given below.

The word *Veda* comes from the root *vid*, to know. It means knowledge in general. It is specially applied to a branch of literature which has been handed down from time immemorial by verbal transmission and is declared to be sacred knowledge or divine revelation (*Sruti*).

The Veda consists of four different classes of literary compositions:

(1) The *Mantra* (saying, song, formula) constitutes the oldest division of Vedic literature, and is distributed in four *Samhitās* or collections known as the *Rik*, *Sāma*, *Yajus*, and *Atharva Samhitās*. The first three are sometimes spoken of as the *Trayī*

or threefold knowledge, being alone recognised at first as canonical scriptures.

The *Rik-Samhitā* is a collection of lyrics in praise of different gods. These were recited by the priest styled the *hotri*. Most of the songs belong to an age anterior to what we have called the Later Vedic period, but the collection as a whole may not be so old. The *Samhitā* of the *Sāmaveda*, or the Book of Chants, contains hardly any independent matter, all its verses except seventy-five being taken directly from the *Rig-Veda*. Its songs were meant to be sung at the Soma sacrifice by a special class of priests called *Udgātri*. The *Samhitā* of the *Yajurveda*, or Book of Sacrificial Prayer, consists not only of stanzas taken from the *Rig-Veda*, but also of original prose formulas to be uttered by the *Adhvaryu* priest who performed the manual work involved in a sacrifice. The collection has two divergent texts, viz., (a) the *Samhitā* of the Black *Yajurveda* preserved in the *Taittirīya*, *Maitrāyaṇī* and *Kāthaka* recensions, and (b) the *Samhitā* of the White *Yajurveda* preserved in the *Vājasaneyī* recension.

At a time considerably later than the *Samhitās* mentioned above, a fourth attained to canonical recognition, the *Atharva Veda*, or the Book of Magic Formulas. Though its recognition came late, much of the matter contained in the collection is old. Some of the Atharvan hymns were of popular rather than priestly origin and may be as old as the earliest parts of the *Rig-Veda*. The *Atharva-Samhitā* is, in the main, a collection of songs, spells and incantations for the healing of disease, the restoration of harmony, the exorcism of evil spirits, etc. But there are certain hymns of rare beauty that celebrate the power and omniscience of God and the beneficence of Mother Earth.

“May Earth pour out her milk for us,
a mother unto me her son.
O Prithivī, auspicious be thy woodlands,
auspicious be thy hills and snow-clad mountains.”

(2) The second class of Vedic works are known by the name of *Brāhmaṇas*, i.e. treatises relating to prayer and sacrificial ceremony. They are mainly prose texts containing observations on sacrifice. They also contain cosmogonic myths, old legends and *gāthās* or verses celebrating the exploits of kings famed in priestly tradition.

(3) Next come the *Āraṇyakas* or forest texts, books of instruction to be given in the forest or writings meant for wood-dwelling hermits, which are found as appendices to the *Brāhmaṇas*. These treatises resemble the *Brāhmaṇas* in language, style and even

content, but they are concerned more with the allegorical significance of rites, and the mystic meaning of the texts of the *Samhitās* than with elaborate rules for the performance of the great sacrifices. The bulk of the *Āraṇyaka* literature is old, but certain portions may belong to a date posterior to the period under review.

(4) Lastly we have the *Upanishads*, "secret or esoteric doctrines". The name is derived by some from the root *upa-ni-sad* which means "to sit down near some one" and is applied to doctrines that may be imparted to a son or a trusted pupil seated near the teacher. The *Upanishads* are either imbedded in the *Āraṇyakas* or form their supplements. They are also found as independent works. They contain deep speculations of a philosophical character which "revolve around the two conceptions of *Brahman* and *Ātman*", i.e. the universal soul, the Absolute and the individual self. The oldest *Upanishads* are usually regarded as pre-Buddhistic, but some of the treatises bearing the name "*Upanishad*" certainly belong to a much later period.

The classes of literary works named above are alone classed as *Śruti*, or Revelation, and constitute the Vedic literature proper. But closely connected with them as auxiliary treatises, though not regarded as a part of the Revelation, there exist a class of compositions called *Vedāṅga*, "members or limbs of the Veda". They are regarded as less authoritative than the *Śruti*, and are styled *Smṛiti*, memory or tradition, as handing down only the tradition derived from ancient sages to whom the Vedas were "revealed". They originated mostly in Vedic schools (*Charaṇas*) and their contents are often expressed in an extremely condensed style of prose intended for memorisation, to which the name *Sūtra* (thread, clue, guide, rule, aphorism) is given. Some of the treatises were versified in later times.

The *Vedāṅgas* are six in number, viz., *Śikshā* (phonetics), *Kalpa* (ritual), *Vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *Nirukta* (etymology), *Chhandas* (metrics), and *Jyotiṣa* (astronomy). These subjects are already mentioned in some of the *Upanishads*, though the extant manuals may belong to a much later period.

The manuals of *Śikshā* deal with the correct pronunciation and accentuation of the Vedic hymns. The productions of the *Śikshā* school include the "connected text" of the *Rig-Veda* as well as the "word-text" which gives the text of the verses in a complete grammatical analysis. But the most remarkable compositions of the *Śikshā* class are the *Prātisākhya Sūtras* which contain the rules by the aid of which the *Samhitā-pāṭha* (connected text) can be formed from the *Pada-pāṭha* (word-text).

The treatises on *Kalpa* or ritual include the *Śrauta Sūtras* which lay down rules for the performance of the great sacrifices, the *Gṛihya Sūtras* which give directions for the simple ceremonies of daily life, and the *Dharma Sūtras* which deal with sacred and secular law and administration. As integral parts of the *Śrauta Sūtras* are found compositions styled *Śulva Sūtras* which lay down rules for the measurement and building of the place of sacrifice and the fire-altars, and are the oldest treatises on Indian geometry.

There are manuals supplementary to the *Kalpa Sūtras* styled *Parīśiṣṭas* or addenda.

In *Vyākaraṇa*, *Nirukta* and *Chhandas* we have the great work of Pāṇini, Yāska, and Piṅgala. A metrical work on *Jyotiṣha Vedāṅga* is extant, but it seems to belong to a comparatively late date.

CHAPTER V

THE BEGINNINGS OF MAGADHAN ASCENDANCY AND THE COMING OF THE YAVANAS

The Great Janapadas

THE idea of a universal king was present before the minds of the Rig-Vedic poets, and in the later Vedic texts we find mention of several rulers who went round the "earth" conquering on every side. These conquests, however, did not normally involve a permanent annexation of the territories of the vanquished people, though minor tribes may now and then have been reduced to vassalage and governed by rulers (*sthapati*) appointed by the conquering *rājan* (king). But from the sixth century B.C. we can trace a new development in Indian politics. We have the growth of a number of powerful kingdoms in eastern India—the very region which in the Brāhmaṇa texts is associated with rulers consecrated to a superior kind of kingship, styled *sāmrājya*—which gradually absorbed the neighbouring states till at last one great monarchy swallowed up the rest and laid the foundations of an empire which ultimately stretched from the Hindukush to the northern districts of Mysore. But before we take up the history of this remarkable political transformation, it is necessary for us to note the changes in the map of India since the period of the Brāhmaṇas and the classical Upanishads.

The widest area known to the Aryans of the Brāhmaṇa period is that described in the *Āitareya Brāhmaṇa*. The boundaries of the Aryan world stretched from the countries of the Uttara Kurus and the Uttara Madras beyond the Himālayas to the land of the Satvats (and Bhojas), south of the Jumnā and the Chambal, and from the territory of the *Nichyas* and *Apāchhyas* in the west to the realm of the *Prāchhyas* in the east. The exact position of the *Nichyas* and *Apāchhyas* cannot be determined. But the *Prāchhyas* were doubtless the Prasii of Greek writers, i.e., the people of Magadha and the neighbouring provinces. Beyond Magadha lived the *Pundras* of North Bengal and the *Vaṅgas* of central and eastern Bengal who were outside the pale of Aryandom. The *Vaṅgas*,

however, are not mentioned in the *Brāhmaṇa* proper but *possibly* in the *Āraṇyaka* attached to it. In the south, besides the Aryan realms of the Bhojas, we find the Andhras of the Godāvarī valley and some aboriginal tribes inhabiting the Vindhyan forests.

The later literature of the Brāhmanical Hindus and the sacred canon of the Buddhists introduce some new names, e.g. Kalinga on the east coast stretching from the Vaitarani in Orissa to the neighbourhood of the Godāvarī, Aśmaka and Mūlaka on the Upper Godāvarī, Avanti in Mālwa, Surāshṭra in Kāthiāwār and Sindhu-Sauvira in the lower valley of the Indus. In an early Buddhist text we have a list of sixteen great nations that occupied the territory from the Kābul valley to the banks of the Godāvarī shortly before the rise of Buddhism. The names of these states are Aṅga (East Bihār), Magadha (South Bihār), Kāśi (Benares), Kosala (Oudh), Vṛjī (North Bihār), Malla (Gorakhpur district), Chedi (between the Jumnā and the Narmadā), Vatsa (Allahābād region), Kuru (Thānesar, Delhi and Meerut districts), Pañchāla (Bareilly, Budāun and Farrukhābād districts), Matsya (Jaipur), Śūrasena (Mathurā), Aśmaka (on the Godāvarī), Avanti (in Mālwa), Gandhāra (Peshāwār and Rāwalpīṇḍi districts), and Kamboja (South-west Kāshnīr and parts of Kāfiristān). The palmy days of the Kurus and the Pañchālas were now over, and the centre of political gravity had shifted to the east.

The Vrijian State

Among the eastern nations mentioned in the above list, the name of the *Videhas* is conspicuous by its absence, and in its place we find mention of Vṛjī (Vajji). The Vrijian State was formed by the union of several clans including the *Lichchhavis* and the *Jñātrikas*. Its capital was at Vaiśālī, modern Besarh or Basarh and Bakhira in the district of Muzaffarpur. The Vṛjī people have been represented by a modern writer as of Mongolian origin because they followed certain customs that are classed as Tibetan, such as exposure of the dead, and also because they are regarded by the Brāhmaṇa law-givers as *Vrātyas* or degraded Kshatriyas. But similar customs are found also among the Irānians; and the *Vrātyas*, judging from Vedic evidence, were clearly an Aryan people, though outside the pale of orthodox Brāhmanism. It is significant that in Buddhist literature the fine appearance of the *Lichchhavis* is compared to that of the *Tāvātimsa* gods.

The *Vrijis* had no monarch, but a popular assembly and elders

who carried on the business of the State. This type of polity was known as a *Gaṇa* or republic. The *Mallas* had a similar constitution and there were besides these a number of smaller republics, e.g., the *Śākya*s of Kapilavastu, the *Bhargas* of Sumsumāra Hill, the *Mauryas* of Pipphalivana, etc.

Four Great Kingdoms

The republics had soon to contend with formidable enemies in the persons of the ambitious potentates of the neighbouring monarchies. Four of the kingdoms had grown more powerful than the rest and were following a policy of expansion and aggrandisement at the expense of their neighbours. These were Avanti, Vatsa, Kosala and Magadha.

The kingdom of Avanti had its capital at Ujjain in modern Mālwa. It was ruled by King Chanda Pradyota Mahāsena, who brought the states in the vicinity of his realm under his control. In the Vatsa territory, i.e., the district round Kauśāmbī or Kosam near Allahābād, reigned Udayana, a scion of the Bharata race, who carried off the beloved daughter of Pradyota and took a wife also from the royal house of Magadha. The supremacy of Udayana extended over the adjoining territory of the Bhargas.

Kosala was ruled by King Mahākosala and his son Prasenajit. It roughly corresponded to modern Oudh. In the heroic age it had its capital at Ayodhyā, on the bank of the river Sarayū, and was ruled by a dynasty that claimed descent from the illustrious Ikshvāku, famed in Vedic and epic tradition. Kosala kings like Para, son of Aṭnāra, won renown as conquerors and sacrificers. Epic tradition represents Kosalan princes as having penetrated through the wilds of Daṇḍakāraṇya, in the Deccan, to the banks of the Pampā or the Tūṅgabhadra and even to the distant island of Ceylon. A branch of the ruling family established itself in Śrāvastī, which has been identified with the great ruined city on the south bank of the Rāptī represented by Saheṭh-Mahēṭh. Members of this line extended the boundaries of Kosala in several directions and absorbed the territory of the Śākya in the Nepalese Tarai and that of the Kāsis in the present district of Benares. But the ambitious designs of Kosala were soon frustrated by another power that arose in the fastnesses of South Bihār.

Magadha, embracing the districts of Patna and Gayā in the southern part of Bihār, could boast of powerful chieftains even in the days of the Vedic *Rishis* and the epic poets. As the probable home of the non-Aryan *Kikatas*, who were noted for their wealth

of kine, it was a coveted prize of the Aryan invader, who, however, could not Brāhmaṇise it thoroughly even in the period of the *Kalpa Sūtras*. It came to possess a mixed population. Brāhmaṇas and Kshatriyas coming to the land were spoken of in a derisive tone as *Brahma-bandhu* and *Kshatra-bandhu*, that is, so-called Brāhmaṇas and Kshatriyas. It had special relations with Aryans outside the pale to whom the name *Vrātya* was given in the Vedic canon.

In the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. the throne of Magadha was occupied by a line of kings styled Śaiśunāgas in the Purāṇas, an appellation derived from Śiśunāga, the first king of the line in the Purāṇic list. Buddhist writers, however, place Śiśunāga much lower in the list of kings, and split up the line into two distinct groups. To the earlier of the two groups they give the name Haryāṅka. The second and later group, consisting of Śiśunāga, his son and grandsons, alone deserve, according to their evidence, the name Śaiśunāga.

Bimbisāra

The most remarkable king of the Haryāṅka line was Śreṇika or Bimbisāra, who was anointed king by his father while yet a boy of fifteen. The event took place, according to Ceylonese tradition, sixty years before the *Parinirvāṇa*, or the death of the Buddha. The *Parinirvāṇa* happened in 544 B.C. according to a Ceylonese reckoning and in 486 B.C. according to a Cantonese tradition of A.D. 489. The date 544 B.C. can, however, hardly be reconciled with a statement in the Ceylonese Chronicles that Aśoka Maurya, who is known to have flourished in the third century B.C., was consecrated two hundred and eighteen years after the Buddha had passed into Nirvāṇa. This fact and certain Chinese and Chola synchronisms led Geiger and a few other scholars to think that the era of 544 B.C. is a comparatively modern fabrication and that the true date of the death of the Buddha is 483 B.C.—a result closely approaching that to which the Cantonese tradition leads us.

The Chinese account of embassies which King Meghavarna sent to Samudra Gupta and King Kia-che (Kassapa) sent to China in A.D. 527 also speaks in favour of the date 486 B.C. or 483 B.C. for the *Parinirvāṇa*. Geiger's date, however, is not explicitly recognised by tradition. The Cantonese date, therefore, may be accepted as a working hypothesis for the Aśokan and pre-Aśokan periods. The date of Bimbisāra's accession, according to this reckoning, would fall about 545 B.C.

From the first, Bimbisāra pursued a policy of expansion. He

possessed certain advantages denied to many of his contemporaries. He was the ruler of a compact kingdom protected on all sides by mountains and rivers. His capital, Girivraja, was enclosed by five hills. It was also girded with stone walls which are among the oldest extant stone structures in India. The soil of the country was rich, yielding luxuriant crops. It was made richer by the gold-bearing stream, the Hiranyavāha or the Śona, which unites with the Ganges near Patna. The people profited by the trade that passed along the Ganges, or followed the land-route through the city of Gayā. In his war-elephants the eastern monarch had a fighting machine which could be used with terrible effect against his western neighbours.

The most notable achievement of Bimbisāra was the annexation of the neighbouring kingdom of Aṅga or East Bihār, which had its capital at Champā near Bhāgalpur. He also entered into matrimonial alliances with the ruling families of Kosala and Vaiśālī. His Kosalan wife brought a Kāsi village yielding a large revenue. The Vaiśālī marriage ultimately paved the way for the expansion of Magadha northward to the borders of Nepāl. Bimbisāra organised an efficient system of administration. He is also credited by a Chinese pilgrim with having built a new city at the foot of the hills lying to the north of Girivraja, which he named Rājagṛiha, or the king's house, the modern Rājgir in the Patna district. Under him Magadha became a flourishing kingdom which attracted the most enlightened men of the age. Both Vardhamāna Mahāvira, the last apostle of the Jainas, and Gautama Buddha, the great Master of the Buddhists, preached their doctrines during the reign of Bimbisāra. Tradition affirms that in his old age the king was murdered by his son Ajātaśatru.

Ajātaśatru

Ajātaśatru, also known as Kūnika, soon found that his throne was not a bed of roses. Prasenajit of Kosala, brother of the queen-dowager, who had died of grief, resolved to avenge himself on the parricide. The republican tribes on the northern and north-western borders of Magadha were restive and entered into a league with the enemies of Ajātaśatru in Kāsi-Kosala. The Magadhan king had thus to face the hostility not only of the ruler of Srāvastī but also of the Vṛijis of Vaiśālī and the Mallas of Kuśinagara (Kasia in Gorakhpur) and Pāvā (probably Padraona on the Gaṇḍak river). To repel the Vṛijis, Magadhan statesmen fortified the village of Pāṭaligrāma which stood near the confluence of the Ganges

and the Śopa. Thus was founded the famous fortress which, within a generation, developed into the stately city of Pāṭaliputra, the metropolis of India for well-nigh four centuries.

Thanks to his own tenacity and the Machiavellian policy of his ministers, Ajātaśatru succeeded in defeating all his adversaries. The Vṛjī territory was annexed to the kingdom of Magadha. Kosala was humbled but not crushed, and, at a slightly later period, we hear of a Kosalan king, a son of Prasenajit, powerful enough to perpetrate a massacre of the Śākya. Prasenajit himself had to renounce his claim to the Kāsi village which had hitherto formed a bone of contention, and give his Magadhan antagonist his daughter in marriage. In religious tradition Ajātaśatru is remembered as a patron of Devadatta, the schismatic cousin of the Buddha, and also as a friend of both the Jainas and the Buddhists. Both Mahāvīra and the Buddha are said to have died early in his reign. After the death of the latter, a Buddhist Council was held at Rājagṛīha which took disciplinary measures against certain prominent members of the Church and compiled the holy scriptures.

Successors of Ajātaśatru

According to the Purāṇas, the immediate successor of Ajātaśatru was Darśaka after whom came his son Udāyi. The name of Darśaka occurs also in a play named *Svapna-Vāsavadatta*, attributed to Bhāsa, which represents him as a brother-in-law and contemporary of Udayana, king of Kauśāmbī. But Buddhist and Jain writers agree in asserting that Udāyi was the son of Ajātaśatru and also his successor. A Nāga-dāsaka is placed by the former at the end of the list of kings of Bimbisāra's line, and this ruler is identified by some with the Darśaka of the Purāṇas. In view of the antiquity of the Buddhist tradition, it is difficult to accept the Purāṇic statement about Udāyi's relationship with Darśaka and Ajātaśatru as correct.

Udāyi had probably to fight with the king of Avanti, but the most notable event of his reign was the foundation of the city of Kusumapura or Pāṭaliputra nestling under the shelter of the fortress erected by the ministers of Ajātaśatru.

The history of Magadha after Udāyi is obscure. The Purāṇic Chronicles place immediately after him two kings named Nandivardhana and Mahānandin, the last of whom is said to have had a son, by a Śūdra woman, named Mahāpadma or Mahāpadmapati Nanda, with whom began a line of Śūdra or semi-Śūdra kings. Buddhist writers, on the other hand, insert thirteen additional

names between Udāyi and Nandivardhana. They omit Mahānandin and mention in his place a prince named Panchamaka. According to the Buddhist account, Udāyi was followed by Anuruddha, Muṇḍa, and Nāgadāsaka, all parricides, of whom the last was banished by the indignant citizens, who met together and anointed as their king a worthy minister known by the name of Śīsunāga (Susunāga). Śīsunāga was succeeded by his son Kālāsoka, after whom came his sons, ten in number, of whom the ninth was Nandivardhana and the tenth Pañchamaka. One Buddhist work, the *Asokāvadāna*, mentions Kākavarṇin, instead of Kālāsoka, among the successors of Muṇḍa.

The most important divergence between the Buddhist and Purāṇic accounts is in regard to the place assigned to Śīsunāga and Kākavarṇin (Kākavarṇa) in the dynastic lists. While Buddhist writers place them long after Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru and even Udāyi, and represent them as belonging to a different family, the Purāṇas make them head the whole list and actually refer to them as ancestors of Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru. There is, however, one detail in the Purāṇic account which throws doubt on the credibility of the tradition it transmits, and tends to confirm the Buddhist evidence. After mentioning the successors of Pradyota, king of Avanti, whom we know to be a contemporary of Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru, the Purāṇas say: "Śīsunāga will destroy all their prestige and will be king." This clear assertion undoubtedly supports the view that Śīsunāga came long after Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru, and carried on their forward policy by the absorption of the powerful kingdom of Avanti (Mālwa).

Śīsunāga's successor, Kālāsoka or Kākavarṇin, seems to have been a ruler of some consequence. He transferred his royal residence permanently from Girivraja to Pāṭaliputra, though Vaiśālī was occasionally graced by the presence of the sovereign. It was in this last city that the second great Council of the Buddhists is said to have been held in the tenth year of the king's reign when a century had gone by since the *Parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. The Assembly settled some disputed points of discipline and condemned the action of certain Vṛjīan monks who tried to introduce a relaxation of the rules. The end of Kākavarṇa was tragic. Tradition affirms that he had a dagger thrust into his throat in the vicinity of a city which may have been Pāṭaliputra, Vaiśālī or some other important city in the empire. His sons were probably young and inexperienced and soon made room for a man of sterner stuff.

The Nandas

The new king belonged to a family called Nanda by all our authorities. His personal name or epithet was Mahāpadma or Mahāpadmapati, "sovereign of an infinite host", or "of immense wealth", according to the Purāṇas, and Ugrasena, "possessed of a terrible army", according to Buddhist writers. After him his eight sons ruled in succession, and then the crown went to Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of a new and more illustrious dynasty. The total duration of the Nanda line was 155 years according to the Jain texts, a century according to the Purāṇas, and only 22 years according to the Buddhist chronicles of Ceylon. The Jain figure is too high for a couple of generations. The Purāṇas agree in assigning a period of 12 years to the sons of Mahāpadma. But they differ in regard to the duration of the reign of Mahāpadma himself, which some put at 88 years and others at 28 years. The smaller figure 28 when added to 12 does not make up the total 100. The higher figure 88 for one reign is incredible and its rejection involves a reduction of the total period of 100 years assigned by Purāṇic tradition to the Nandas. In view of this, the Ceylonese account cannot be lightly dismissed.

Regarding the parentage of the first Nanda, we have two distinct traditions. The Purāṇas represent him as son of Mahānandin, the last king of the Śaiśunāga dynasty, by a Śūdra woman. Jaina writers, on the other hand, represent him as the son of a courtesan by a barber. The Jaina tradition about the barber origin of the first Nanda is strikingly supported by the testimony of Quintus Curtius. Referring to the *father* of the *predecessor* of Chandragupta Maurya who must be identified with the first Nanda, Curtius says that he was a barber who gained the affections of the queen, murdered his sovereign, and then, under the pretence of acting as guardian of the royal children, usurped the supreme authority. He next put the young princes to death. The murdered sovereign seems to have been Kākavarṇin, whose sons were evidently the young princes who were done to death by the ambitious barber.

The new king, though of humble origin, was a vigorous ruler. Purāṇic tradition affirms that he exterminated all Kshatriyas and became sole monarch, bringing all under his undisputed sway. The ascription of a wide dominion to the Nanda king is supported by Greek evidence which refers to the most powerful peoples who dwelt beyond the Beas in the time of Alexander as being under one sovereign who had his capital at Pāṭaliputra. A Kalinga inscription of early date refers to Nanda's connection with an

aqueduct in that country. This may be taken to imply that King Nanda held sway also in Kalinga, that is, Southern Orissa and the contiguous part of the Northern Circars.

The first Nanda was succeeded by his eight sons, of whom the last was named Dhana-Nanda, the Agrammes or Xandrames of classical writers. This monarch owned a vast treasure and commanded a huge army of 20,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, 2,000 chariots and no less than 3,000 elephants. Some writers raise the number of horsemen, chariots and elephants to 80,000, 8,000, and 6,000 respectively. To amass the treasure and maintain the huge force, the king had to resort to heavy taxation. His conduct towards the people bespoke his low origin. It is therefore no wonder that he was "detested and held cheap by his subjects". The disaffected element found a leader in Chandragupta who overthrew the Nanda dynasty, and laid the foundation of the illustrious family of the Mauryas. If tradition is to be believed, a Taxilian Brāhmaṇa named Kauṭilya or Chāṇakya played a leading part in the dynastic revolution. The conqueror of the Nandas had also another problem—the presence of foreign invaders in the north-western provinces of his country.

Persian and Macedonian Invasions

Gandhāra, the territory round Peshāwār and Rāwalpiṇḍī, was, in the time of Bimbisāra, under a king named Pukkusāti, who sent an embassy and a letter to the king of Magadha. What the object of the mission was we do not know, but about the middle of the sixth century B.C. we find the hordes of Cyrus (c. 558–530 B.C.), the founder of the Achaemenian empire of Persia, knocking at the gates of India and destroying the famous city of Kāpiśa near the junction of the Ghorband and Panjshir rivers north-east of Kābul. The district west of the river Indus became tributary to the Persians, and the name of Gandhāra began to appear prominently among the subject nations in the early inscriptions of Darius (522–486 B.C.), the most illustrious among the successors of Cyrus. Darius followed up the earlier successes of his house by sending a naval expedition to the Indus under the command of Skylax. This expedition paved the way for the annexation of the Indus valley as far as the deserts of Rājputāna. It constituted the twentieth and the most populous satrapy of the Persian empire. It paid a tribute proportionately larger than all the rest—360 Euboic talents of gold dust, equivalent to more than a million sterling.

Xerxes, the son of Darius I, and his successors seem to have maintained some control over the Indian provinces, which furnished contingents to their army. Reference is made in certain inscriptions of Xerxes to the suppression of rebellion in lands "where, before, the Daivas were worshipped; then, by Ahuramazda's will, of such temples of the Daivas I (the king) sapped the foundations". The Daiva-worshipping lands may have included the Indian satrapies. But the hold of the later Achaemenians on their eastern possessions gradually became weak, and towards the middle of the fourth century B.C. the Indian borderland was parcelled out among various small States, the rulers of which were practically independent.

The hill country north of the Kābul river, drained by the Kunar and the Swāt, was occupied mainly by the Aśvakas, a people whose name is derived from the Sanskrit *Aśva*, Irānian *Aspa* (horse). Somewhere in this mountain region stood also the city of Nysa, alleged to have been founded by Greek colonists. The old territory of Gandhāra was divided into two parts by the Indus. To the west of the river lay the kingdom of Pushkalāvati in the modern district of Peshāwār and to its east was the realm of Takshaśilā (Taxila) in the present district of Rāwalpindi. Taxila was a prosperous kingdom governed by good laws. Its capital was a noble city which occupied the site of the present Bhir Mound near Saraikala, twenty miles north-west of Rāwalpindi. It lay on the high road from Central Asia to the interior of India, and the fame of its market-place spread to the distant corners of the civilised world. Great as an emporium of commerce, the city was greater still as a centre of learning. Crowds of eager scholars flocked to it for instruction in the three Vedas and the eighteen branches of knowledge. Tradition affirms that the Great Epic, the *Mahābhārata* was first recited in this city.

The mountain territory just above the Taxila country was occupied by the kingdoms of Urasā (Hazāra district) and Abhisāra (Punch and Naoshera). To the south-east of Taxila lay the twin kingdoms of the Pūrus or Pauravas, a people already famous in the Vedic hymns. The territory of the prince mentioned by Greek historians as the elder Poros, was situated between the Jhelum and the Chenāb, while the principality of his nephew, the younger Poros, stretched from the Chenāb to the Rāvi. On the confines of the country of the Pauravas lay the territories of the Glaukanikoi and Kathaioi and the principality of Saubhūti. The southern part of the Jhang district with the contiguous portion of the lower valley of the Rāvi was occupied by the Sībīs and the *Mālavas*, with whom were associated the *Kshudrakas*, while lower down the

Chenāb lived the *Ambashthas*. These tribes were autonomous and some of them are expressly mentioned as having a democratic government. Upper Sind was divided among a number of potentates of whom the most important was Mousikanos, whose capital probably lay at or near Alor. In the Indus delta stood the city of Pattala which, like Sparta, was governed by two kings and a Senate of Elders.

In 336 B.C. the throne of Macedon, a powerful military State in the land of the Yavanas in south-east Europe, was occupied by Alexander, a prince of remarkable energy and ability. In 333 and 331 B.C. Alexander inflicted two severe defeats on the great king of Persia, the last of the line of Darius and Xerxes, and occupied his realm. In 330 B.C. the Persian king died, leaving his conqueror the undisputed master of the Achaemonian empire. Three years later, in 327 B.C., Alexander crossed the Hindukush and resolved to recover the Indian satrapies that had once acknowledged the sway of his Persian predecessors. To secure his communications, he garrisoned a number of strongholds near modern Kābul and passed the winter of 327–326 B.C. in warfare with the fierce hill tribes of the Kunar and Swāt valleys. He stormed the fortresses of Massaga and Aornos and received the submission of the city of Nysa. His generals took the city of Pushkalāvati. Massaga probably lay to the north of the Malakand Pass. Aornos has recently been identified with the height of Unā between the Swāt and the Indus, while Nysa has been located on the lower spur of the three-peaked Koh-i-Mor between the Kunar and Swāt valleys. Pushkalāvati is represented by the modern Charsadda near the junction of the Swāt and Kābul rivers, about seventeen miles north-east of Peshāwār.

The conqueror next forced his way through dense jungles to Ohind and crossed the Indus by a bridge of boats (326 B.C.). In his operations, he received valuable help from Āmbhi, king of Taxila, who now received the invader in his own capital with obsequious pomp. After a brief respite, Alexander resumed his march and pushed on to the Hydaspes (Vitastā, modern Jhelum). According to one theory, he followed the line of the modern Grand Trunk Road to the town of Jhelum. According to another view, he descended through the pass of Nandan to the right bank of the Hydaspes close to the village of Haranpur. On his arrival, he found a huge army drawn up on the other bank of the river to oppose his further progress. The formidable host was led by the elder Paurava king, a man of gigantic and powerful build, who was mortified at the pusillanimous conduct of his Taxilian neighbour,

and resolved to defend his hearth and home against the audacious invader from the west. Alexander found it impossible to cross the stream, which was then in full flood, in the face of a mighty array of warriors and elephants. He diverted the attention of his enemy by demonstrations in different directions and then stole a passage at a sharp bend of the river about seventeen miles above his camp, under cover of a thickly wooded promontory and an island in mid-stream covered with jungle. The place of crossing is located by some above the town of Jhelum and by others at Jalalpur. A small force that had hurried to dispute the passage of the invaders was easily routed, and Alexander advanced quickly to give battle to the Indian king. The Paurava, too, marched forth to meet his adversary and drew up his army in battle array. He had with him 30,000 foot, 4,000 horses, 300 chariots, and 200 elephants. He arranged his elephants in front of the infantry and placed the cavalry on the wings with chariots in front of them. The vast force looked like a city with elephants as bastions and men-at-arms as the circumvallating wall. The field of battle cannot be definitely located. Scholars who place Alexander's camp at Jhelum think that the hostile forces met in the Karri plain.

The Indian king made the mistake of allowing the Macedonians to take the offensive with their superior cavalry. The latter began by an attack on the Indian left wing. The Indian charioteer and horseman could not withstand the onslaught of the mounted archers in the Macedonian ranks, and the Indian infantry were prevented by the slippery slush under foot from making an effective use of their formidable bows. The elephants for a time spread havoc in the enemy's ranks, but many of the monsters were maddened by wounds and rushed on friends and foes alike. The Paurava force suffered most and was soon scattered by the veterans of Alexander. The Indian king, however, did not flee, but went on fighting on a mighty elephant until he received a severe wound. He was then brought to the presence of the conqueror, who asked him how he would like to be treated. "Act like a king," answered the valiant Paurava. The Macedonian treated his gallant adversary generously and gave him back his kingdom. It was no part of Alexander's policy to alienate the sympathy of powerful local princes if it could be helped, and he understood the value of brave and chivalrous allies in a newly-acquired territory, far away from the seat of empire, who could be trusted to uphold the authority of the supreme ruler and serve as a check on one another.

The invader next overran the petty principalities and tribal

territories in the vicinity of the realm of the great Paurava. He crossed the Akesines (Chenāb) and the Hydraotes (Rāvi), stormed Sāngala, the stronghold of the Kathai, probably situated in the Gurudaspur district, and moved on to the Hyphasis (Beas). He wished to press forward to the Ganges valley, but his war-worn troops would not allow him to go farther. The king erected twelve towering altars to mark the utmost limit of his march, and then with a heavy heart retraced his steps to the Jhelum. He sent part of his troops down the river in a flotilla of boats under the command of Nearchos. The rest fought their way through the territory of free and warlike tribes inhabiting the lower valley of the Rāvi and the Chenāb. Thousands of people, including women and children, perished in the course of the struggle, and the inhabitants of one city, preferring death to dishonour, threw themselves into the flame in the manner of the Rājputs who practised *Jauhar* in later times.

The conqueror himself received a dangerous wound while storming one of the citadels of the powerful tribe of the *Mālavas*. The subdued nations made presents of chariots, bucklers, gems, draperies, lions, tigers, etc. Alexander next reduced the principalities of Sind and sailed to the open sea (325 B.C.). A portion of the Macedonian host had already been sent home through Afghānistān. Another division, led by the king himself, trudged through the deserts of Baluchistān and, after terrible sufferings, reached Babylon. The rest of the troops returned by sea to the north of the Tigris under the command of Nearchos. Alexander did not long survive his return to Babylon, where he died in 323 B.C.

Administrative arrangements made by Alexander

The Macedonian king had no desire to renounce his new conquests. He wished to incorporate them permanently into his extensive empire. He formed the districts to the west of the Hydaspes into regular satrapies under Persian or Macedonian governors who were assisted, in some cases, by Indian chiefs like Śaśigupta of Aornos and Āmbhi of Taxila. Beyond the river he created a system of protected States under vassal kings, among whom the great Paurava and the king of Abhisāra were the most eminent. Macedonian garrisons were stationed in Pushkalāvati, Taxila, and other important strategic centres. New cities were built, mostly on the great rivers, to establish the authority of the conqueror firmly in the acquired territories and stimulate trade and navigation in the Land of the Five Rivers.

Effect of the Persian and Macedonian Invasions

The Macedonian prefectures and garrisons were soon swept away by Chandragupta Maurya, and within a few years all vestige of foreign domination disappeared from the Punjab and Sind. But the invasions of Darius and Alexander had not been in vain. The Persian conquest had unveiled India probably for the first time to the Western world and established contact between this country and the peoples of the Levant. Indian spearmen and archers fought under the Persian banner on European soil in the fifth century B.C. and quickened the interest of the peoples of Hellas in this land of strange folks and surpassing wealth. Persian and Greek officials found employment in the Indus provinces and made their presence felt in various ways. The introduction of new scripts—Aramaic, *Kharoshthi* and the alphabet styled *Yavanānī* by Pāṇini, is probably to be traced to this source. Whether some important features of the architecture of the Maurya period and certain phrases used in the Aśokan edicts are also to be attributed to their enterprise, is a highly debatable question. The hold of the great king on the Indian frontier slackened considerably in the fourth century B.C. The arduous campaigns of Alexander restored the fallen fabric of imperialism and laid the foundation of a closer contact between India and the Hellenic world. The Macedonian empire in the Indus valley no doubt perished within a short time. But the Macedonian had welded the political atoms into one unit and thus paved the way for the more permanent union under the Mauryas. The voyages and expeditions planned by Alexander widened the geographical horizon of his contemporaries, and opened up new lines of communication and new routes for trade and maritime enterprise. The colonies that the conqueror planted in the Indian borderland do not appear to have been altogether wiped out by the Mauryas. Yavana officials continued to serve the great king of Magadha as they had served the great king of Ecbatana and Persepolis, and Yavana adventurers carved out independent kingdoms in the north-west when the sun of Magadha set. If Greeks in later ages learnt lessons in philosophy and religion from Indian Buddhists and Bhāgavatas, the Indians on their part imitated the Greek coinage, honoured Greek astronomers and appreciated Hellenistic art. This was due ultimately to the measures that Alexander had adopted "to set little bits of Hellas down" in the wilds of Western and Central Asia and on the banks of the Indus and the Akesines.

CHAPTER VI

CIVILISATION IN THE EARLY DAYS OF MAGADHAN ASCENDANCY

Sources

FOR the history of the Indian civilisation during the early period of Magadhan hegemony we have to turn to various sources. No single set of documents gives a picture of the whole of India. For an authentic account of the Indus valley and the north-western borderland, we have to depend mainly on Greek evidence. For the *Madhya-desa* or the upper Ganges valley, and particularly its western part, the land of the Kurus and the Pañchālas which was the cradle and centre of Brāhmanism, we have to look to the Brāhmanical *Sūtras* and the early epic. The epic, no doubt, looks back to the heroic age which is coeval with the later Vedic period, but the extant poems have a wider geographical outlook than the later Vedic texts.

Administration

Neither in the east nor in the west was monarchy the only form of government in the beginning of our period or towards its close. There were, no doubt, powerful *rājās* in South Bihār and Oudh, as well as in Mālwa and the Punjab, who were fighting to extend their authority at the expense of their neighbours and build up true imperial States. But they had to reckon with free and war-like tribes, governed by their own elders and owning the authority of no monarch. Kingship, again, was not everywhere of the same type. Some of the kingdoms in eastern India were true *Sāmrājyas*, governed by rulers who could justly call themselves *Ekarāt* or sole monarch. In the Indus delta, on the other hand, we have kings who commanded in war but left the work of government to a Senate of Elders. The number of kings was two, as in Sparta, an early instance of *dvairājya* or diarchy, so famous in Indian history and tradition. While *Sūdras* acquired supreme power in the lower Ganges valley, the state of things in the lower valley of the Indus was different, and great political power was exercised

by the Brāhmaṇas. The *rājā* of the *Madhya-deśa*, judging by the testimony of the epic, was no autocrat. He carried on the affairs of his realm with the assistance of the *Sabhā*, usually consisting of princes of the blood and military chiefs. The circle of advisers was sometimes enlarged by the admission of priests and officials or representatives of lower orders like the *Sūtas*. Among certain tribes, all clansmen had a right to attend the *Sabhā*, which was thus a popular assembly and not a council of magnates. Even in kingdoms where the popular assembly is not much in evidence, the monarch had to defer to the wishes of Brāhmaṇas, elders of corporations and the commonalty. He had to do what was pleasing to the people. For the efficient discharge of his duties he had to learn the *Vedas* and the *Śāstras*. Tyrannical princes were not infrequently expelled from the throne. Even in Magadha, the citadel of imperialism, the king consulted the village headmen. A dynasty was driven out by the citizens because of its delinquencies.

Monarchies were often hereditary and the reigning prince at times nominated his successor. But cases of election are referred to by all our authorities. Choice was sometimes limited to members of the royal family, but on occasions selections were made from outside. A Greek writer tells us that in a certain district of the Punjab the handsomest man was chosen as king. Kingship was no longer a monopoly of the Kshatriya caste, and one of the most powerful dynasties of the age was of Śūdra extraction.

With the growth of kingdoms and the incorporation of new territory, the office of the viceroy and provincial governor became more and more important. Among other State functionaries, the *Purohita* was of special importance in Kāsi-Kosala, as we learn from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and several *Jātakas*. In the Kuru-Pañchāla and Matsya countries, on the other hand, the *Purohita* was over-shadowed by the *Senāpati*, who was often a prince of the blood or a person of royal rank.

The most important feature of the administrative development of the period under review was the rise of a class of high officials styled *mahāmātras*, who are unknown to the Vedic texts and gradually tend to disappear after the Maurya and Sātavāhana periods. They were charged with duties of a varied character. Some looked after general affairs (*sarvārthaka*). Others administered justice (*vyāvahārika*). A third body had charge of the army (*senā-nāyaka*). Others were entrusted with the work of cadastral survey (*rajjugrāhaka*) or measurement of the king's share of the produce (*dronamāpaka*).

In the administration of justice, the king continued to play

an important part. It was his duty to give decisions in accordance with the special laws of the districts, castes, and families. But much of the judicial work was now entrusted to the *Vyāvahārikas* or judges.

Scarcely less important than the administration of justice was the protection of the people from armed foes. To do this duty the rulers had to maintain big armies. Important changes were effected in military organisation by the introduction of war-elephants as a regular feature of the fighting forces, and the creation of the body of *mahāmātras* to take charge of the department of war. Armies of the period usually consisted of four elements: infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants. To these the later epic adds the navy, labourers, spies and local guides. Greek writers refer to expert sailors in the Indus delta whom the Macedonians employed to steer their vessels down to the ocean when their own attempts at navigation failed. It is not improbable that rulers of the deltaic regions maintained small fleets even before the organisation of a big naval department by the founder of the Maurya dynasty.

About the equipment of Indian troops in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. we have fortunately a few details recorded by Greek observers. The Indian infantry, clad in cotton garments, usually carried long bows and iron-tipped arrows made of cane. Some were armed with spears. They also carried a two-handed sword and a buckler of undressed ox-hide. The cavalry had usually the same equipment as the infantry. The chariots were drawn by horses or wild asses and carried six men apiece, of whom two were bowmen, two were shield-bearers, and two were charioteers. Epic poets refer to the division of the army into *akshauhiniḥ*, *vāhinīḥ*, etc., mention different kinds of battle-array (*vyūha*), and allude to various projectiles including the *śataghnī* or hundred-killer. Jaina writers refer to the use made by Ajātaśatru of the *mahāsilākaṇṭaga* and *ra(t)hamusala*. The first seems to have been some engine of war of the nature of a catapult which threw big stones. The second was a chariot to which a mace was attached and which, running about, effected great execution.

Greek writers bear testimony to the fact that in the art of war Indians were far superior to the other peoples of Asia. Their failure to offer a successful resistance to foreign invaders was often due to an inferiority in cavalry. Indian commanders in ancient times pinned their faith more upon elephants than upon horses.

The maintenance of a splendid court, a big army and a large body of civil officials required money. Weak rulers had sometimes to appease their conquerors by the payment of heavy tribute.

Some of the kings loved to hoard treasure to the amount of several millions. The collection of revenue was, therefore, all-important to the State, and sometimes strange expedients were resorted to by rulers to fill their treasuries. The oldest source of revenue was the *bali*, a contribution mentioned as early as the Vedic hymns. *Bhāga*, the king's share of reaped corn, became, in course of time, the most important source of State revenue, and *śaḍbhāgin*, "a sharer of the sixth part", a standing epithet of the king. The *bhāga* was measured out either by the village authorities or by royal officials at the barn-doors, or by survey of the crops. Among the most important revenue officials was the *Grāma-bhojaka* or village head-man. The office was sometimes held by royal ministers. *Bali* gradually acquired the sense of an oppressive impost, and the collectors of *bali* were apparently classed with man-eating demons. Among other royal dues, mention may be made of "milk-money", payable by the people when an heir was born to the king, and taxes and octroi duties paid by merchants. The ruler also imposed at times forced labour and claimed the right to dispose of forest land and unowned property.

About the kingless States or republics our information is mainly derived from Buddhist and Greek sources, though some details are given by the Sanskrit epics and works on polity as well as the sacred literature of the Jainas. Coins and inscriptions are not of much help for our period. The word for a republic was *Samgha* or *Gana*, but the terms were also applied to religious fraternities and economic corporations. Like monarchies, the republics, too, were not all of the same type. Some were tribal oligarchies, others are expressly mentioned as having a democratic constitution. Some of these States embraced several clans, others were limited to single *Kulas* or even cities. Some were sovereign States owning no allegiance to any external authority. Others did homage to some neighbouring potentate, though enjoying a considerable degree of local autonomy. There were, however, certain features common to all. Each had its *parishad* or assembly which met in the *saṁsthāgāra* or mote-hall where young and old alike were present. According to a high authority, the method of procedure generally adopted in the tribal meetings was not by voting on a motion. The point at issue was either carried unanimously or referred for arbitration to a committee of referees. Besides the central assembly at the capital, there were local *parishads* in all the more important places in the State. The citizens honoured and esteemed the *Mahallakas* or elders and held it a point of duty to hearken to their words. Executive government was in the hands

of a single chief or a number of chiefs styled *Rājān*, *Gaṇa rājān* or *Samghamukhya*, corresponding to the Roman consul or Greek archon. The *Rājās* or *Samghamukhyas* were either identical with the *Mahallakas* or selected from them. The title *Rājān* was sometimes loosely applied to all the chief men of the State, for we hear of 7,707 *Rājās* among the *Lichchhavis*, though one document puts the figure at 500 and a Jaina text seems to limit the title to only nine. A Buddhist commentary seems to suggest that the *Rājās* ruled by turns. The number of elderly citizens eligible for the chief executive office probably fluctuated from time to time.

Besides the *Rājān* there were other functionaries styled *Uparājān* (vice-consul), *Senāpati* (general), *Bhāṇḍāgārika* (treasurer), etc.

Social Life

With the Aryan expansion over practically the whole of India, came a wide diversity of social conditions. Customs not approved in the Gangetic Doāb were admitted as good usage in the north beyond the river Sarasvatī or the south beyond the Narmadā. Women, for example, enjoyed in southern India certain privileges denied to their mid-Indian sisters. The wife in the south was allowed to eat in the company of her husband, and restrictions on the marriage of cognates were not so strict in the south as in the north. Widow marriage and Levirate had not fallen into disuse even in the Ganges valley, and burning of widows was not sanctioned by the orthodox lawgivers. But the practice of *Satī* could not have been unknown in the north-west. In the epic we hear of the self-immolation of a princess born in the Madra country in the Punjab, and Greek writers refer to the widow of an Indian commander who "departed to the pyre crowned with fillets by her women and decked out splendidly as for a wedding". A few polyandrous marriages are alluded to in the epic, but these were not sanctioned by general usage and must have been of very rare occurrence.

The picture of the woman in the Greek accounts, Buddhist discourses or epic tales does not always agree with that portrayed in the formal codes of law. The women of the *Dharma-Sūtras* were helpless beings who were always dependent on their male relations and were classed with properties of minors or sealed deposits. The women known to Alexander's contemporaries took the arms of their fallen relatives and fought side by side with the men against the enemy of their country. The epic matron exhorted her indolent son to "flare up like a torch, though it be

but for a moment, but smother not like a fire of chaff just to prolong life". Education was not denied to women, some of whom are described as being widely known for their knowledge, learning, and dialectic skill. Buddhist texts refer to princesses who composed poems that are preserved in the *Therī-gāthā* or the Psalms of the Sisters. In several epic stories we find references to *svayamvara* or choice of a husband by the bride herself, and in a famous episode of the *Mahābhārata* a king asked his daughter to choose a husband and said that he would give her the man of her choice. Seclusion of women was practised in certain families, but many of the epic tales bear witness to a freer life where women laid aside their veils and came out of the seclusion of their houses. This was specially the case on the occasion of a great national festival or sorrow. "Women should not be slain," says one great epic poet. "A wife is half the man," says another, and adds that

"Whene'er we suffer pain and grief
Like mothers kind they bring relief."

The common people mostly lived in villages in humble dwellings made of thatch which were sometimes mud-plastered for fear of fire. Kings resided in fortified towns (*pur*) or cities (*nagara*) provided with lofty walls, strong ramparts, watch-towers and gates. These cities contained pleasure parks, streets lighted with torches and watered, assembly halls, dancing halls, gambling houses, courts of justice, booths for traders and work-places of artisans. The number of big cities was not large. Early Buddhist texts refer to six such places—Champā (near Bhagalpur), Rājagṛiha (in the Patna district), Śrāvastī (Sahet̥h-Mahet̥h), Sāketa (Oudh), Kauśāmbī (near Allahābād), and Benares (Varanasi or Banaras) as flourishing in the days of the Buddha. Taxila is omitted in this list, either because it had not yet risen to greatness or because it was far away in the north-west. The city of Pāṭaliputra was founded after the death of the sage of the Śākya. One of the capital cities, that of a kingless State, is expressly mentioned as a "little wattle and daub town", "a branch township" surrounded by jungles.

The royal residence in the Brāhmanical Sūtras is a modest structure probably built of wood. Buddhist texts refer to a palace of stone, but it was in fairyland. They also mention buildings of seven storeys in height (*sapta bhūmaka prāsāda*). It is suggested by a high authority that in early times the superstructure at least of all dwellings was either woodwork or brickwork. But certain texts refer to workers in stone who built houses with material from

the ruins of a former village. The imperial palace described in the epic is a noble mansion made of stone and metal and provided with arches and roofs supported by a thousand pillars.

The inner court of the palace contained playgrounds with flowers and fountains where the women amused themselves. Little princesses had their dolls, *pañchālikā*. They also played with a ball, *kanduka*, while the boys sported with a ball or hockey (*viṭā*), which they rolled or tossed about. The usual recreations of women were singing, dancing and music. There was a dancing hall attached to almost every palace. Men, too, are represented by Greek authors as being very fond of singing and dancing. But the chief pastimes of knights were gambling, hunting, listening to tales of war, and tournaments in amphitheatres surrounded by platforms for spectators. Buddhist texts refer to acrobatic feats, combats of animals and a kind of primitive chess play.

The dress of the people of the Indus valley consisted of a tunic made of cotton and two other pieces of stuff, one thrown about their shoulders and the other twisted round their heads. Men wore ear-rings and dyed their beards. They used umbrellas and shoes. Women of the aristocratic class were decked with golden stars about their heads and a multitude of necklets and bangles set with precious gems. Girls of the same classes in the Gangetic region also wore necklaces besides waist-bands and anklets adorned with bells. They were gaudily attired in linen or yellow or red silk.

The early epic warrior did not feel much compunction in taking meat, but in the later epic the slaughter of animals in the manner of the Kshatriyas is regarded as cruel and ghoulish. The growing feeling of pity for animate beings is reflected in the exhortation "don't kill the guiltless cow", and the practice of substituting images of animals made out of meal for real living creatures. The ordinary fare of the Indians of the north-west borderland, according to Greek observers, consisted of pulpy rice and seasoned meat. These were served up on a gold dish placed on a table. The drinking of wine was not widely prevalent except on the occasion of religious festivals. People in upper Sind had a kind of Lacedaemonian common meal where they ate in public. Their food consisted of what was taken in the chase.

Social distinctions were becoming rigid, though the epic philosophers declared that "There was no distinction of caste. The whole of this universe was divine, having emanated from *Brahman*. Created equally by the supreme spirit men had on account of their deeds been divided into various castes." The

Greek writers note at the end of this period that the custom of the country prohibited intermarriage between the castes. Custom also prohibited anyone from exercising two trades, or from changing from one caste to another. The sophist only could come from any caste. Brāhmanical lawgivers developed the theory of defilement and laid a ban on certain kinds of food as being intrinsically unfit for consumption by the twice-born or upper castes. Others, when defiled by the touch of certain classes of men and women, were regarded as impure. The theory of mixed castes is produced so as to explain the presence of new communities like the *Yavanas*. But such a theory tacitly admits that intermarriage between the castes did take place, and was legally recognised, though it was looked upon with disfavour by some of the law-givers. Legal maxims were counsels of perfection which were not always followed in practice. Greek historians refer to the matrimonial alliance between an Indian king and a Greek potentate. They also draw attention to the political activities and militancy of the Brāhmaṇas in the lower Indus valley, and allude to the rise of a dynasty of barber origin in the valley of the Ganges. Purāṇic writers refer to marriages of Kshatriya kings with Śūdra women and the assumption of royal authority by the Śūdras. Cases of intermarriage between castes and change of caste and occupation are also found in the epic. An epic king marries a Brāhmaṇa girl. A Kshatriya prince is promoted to the rank of a Brāhmaṇa. A Brāhmaṇa warrior leads the Kuru host against the Pāṇḍus and chieftains of the Pañchāla country. A Kshatriya prince does not hesitate to embrace a Nishāda whom he calls his friend, and takes food from a Śavara woman who has already served several sages.

Buddhist writers acknowledge the existence of the four *varṇas* and numerous degraded tribes and low trades (*hīnajāti* and *hīnaśīlpa*) besides aboriginal peoples, outcastes and slaves. They refer to pride of birth and taboos on intermarriage and inter-dining, especially with slave girls and outcastes. But they give the palm to the Kshatriya and, like some epic poets, usually regard character, and not birth or ceremonial purity, as the true test of caste. Like the epic poets again, they refer to a certain elasticity of caste rules in the matter of *connubium*, commensality and change of calling. Brāhmaṇas took wives from royal houses. Princes, priests and pedlars ate together and intermarried. Brāhmaṇas and Kshatriyas took to trade and menial work. Weavers became archers. It is clear that social divisions and economic occupations did not exactly coincide, though the texts testify to a natural predilection of artisans and traders for the ancestral calling.

Economic Condition

As already stated, the vast majority of the people seem to have preferred country life to residence in "towns covered with dust". The rural population consisted mainly of agriculturists and ranchmen, but we have also references to "craft villages" of carpenters, smiths and potters. Towns mainly attracted the ruling and commercial classes.

The simple rites of the *Grihya Sūtras*, such as "the furrow sacrifice" and "the threshing-floor sacrifice", testify to the importance of the agricultural population. The farmers lived in villages, the number of which was very large in every kingdom. Villages were largely autonomous, though under the suzerainty of the king who received certain dues that have already been specified above and sometimes claimed the right of appointing the headman or officials who collected the village dues for him. The king's right to agricultural land was probably limited to a share of its produce. The king could remit the tithe due to the Government or make it over to anyone he wished to favour. But even royal officials scrupulously avoided encroachment upon the rights of the peasant householders (*grihapati*).

Nearchos refers to the cultivation of lands in the north-west by a whole kinship. Each individual took what he needed out of the produce and the remnant was destroyed to discourage sloth. In the Ganges valley, the arable land of the village (*grāmakshetra*) was split up into plots held by heads of houses who managed their own holdings but co-operated for purposes of fencing and irrigation under the guidance of the headman (*Bhojaka*, *Grāmika*). The holdings were usually small, but large estates farmed by Brāhmaṇas were known though they were very rare. The bigger holdings were to a great extent managed with the assistance of hired labour. Slaves were not kept in large numbers and were ordinarily employed as domestic servants.

The householders who had shares of the village field and constituted the village community have been described as peasant proprietors, but it is not clear whether they had any proprietary rights as against the community or could transfer their shares to outsiders. Sale or gift of land was not unknown in Oudh or South Bihār, but the recorded cases generally refer to big estates owned by priests or nobles, and not to the small holdings of the ordinary members of the village community.

The village peasants were a generally contented lot, and both men and women had the civic spirit to work for the common

good. The result of co-operation was seen in the construction of reservoirs and the laying out of irrigation canals. In spite of their best endeavours, however, villagers could not escape famine for all time. The calamity, however, was not of frequent occurrence and, when it did come, its area was restricted.

The rural population included, besides the village agriculturists, a considerable body of ranchmen who tended cattle. They avoided towns and villages and lived in cattle-ranches styled *ghosha*. Some of the cowboys roamed about with their flocks in forests and on the mountains. The herdsman was frequently employed to guard the royal cattle and to take the flocks of the village folk to the common grazing field beyond the cultivated lands.

Handicraftsmen constituted a large part of the population both in rural and urban areas. The number of callings was large and included workers in stone and ivory and painters of frescoes. In some of the industries a considerable degree of specialisation was reached. They were also, to a large extent, localised and limited to particular families, for there was a general tendency among artisans for the son to follow the paternal calling. Eighteen of the more important crafts were organised into guilds (*Śreṇī*, *Pūga*), each of which was presided over by a *Pramukha* (foreman), *Jyeshṭhaka* (elder) or *Śreshṭhin* (chief). We sometimes hear of a *Mahāśreshṭhin* or supreme chief, and *Anuśreshṭhin* or deputy chief. Above all the guild officials stood the *Bhāṇḍāgārika* who combined the post of State Treasurer with supreme headship over all the *Śreṇīs*.

It is doubtful if the full guild organisation had spread to seamen and traders. Some of them had a *Jyeshṭhaka* (elder) or a *Sārthavāha* (caravan-leader) and worked in union under a *Śreshṭhin*. But subordination to the leader or elder was not always in evidence, and merchants often plied their trade alone.

The range of activities of sailors and merchants in the period represented by the Pāli texts whose exact date is unknown was wide. We hear of sea-voyages and of trading journeys to the coast of Burma and the Malay world (*Suvarṇa-bhūmi*), Ceylon (*Tāmraparṇī*) and even to Babylon (*Baveru*). But navigators for the most part trafficked up and down the great rivers, especially the Indus, the Ganges and its tributaries. The principal sea-ports were *Bhṛigukachcha* (Broach), *Śūrpāraka* (Sopara, north of Bombay) and perhaps *Tāmrālipti* (Tamluk in West Bengal). Of the riparian ports, *Sahajāti* (in Central India), *Kauśāmbī* on the Jumnā, Benares, *Chāmpā* (near Bhagalpur), and latterly *Pāṭaliputra* on the Ganges and *Pattala* on the Indus deserve special mention. The great inland routes mostly radiated from Benares and *Śrāvastī*.

One great highway connected the chief industrial and commercial centres of the Ganges valley with Central and Western Asia by way of the prosperous city of Taxila. Another stretched from Rājagriha in South Bihār by way of Śrāvastī in Oudh to the banks of the Godāvarī. Still another, and a far more difficult, route lay across the desert of Rājputāna to the ports of Sauvīra in the lower Indus valley and of the Upper Deccan near the mouth of the Narmadā. Adventurous merchants were guided along this route with difficulty by land-pilots who kept to the right track by observing the stars.

The chief articles of trade were silk, muslin, embroidery, ivory, jewellery and gold. The system of barter had not died out altogether, but the use of coins as the medium of exchange was becoming general. The standard unit of value was the copper *Kārshāpaṇa*, weighing a little more than 146 grains. Silver coins were also in circulation. King Āmbhi of Taxila presented Alexander with two hundred talents of coined silver. The weight of a silver *Kārshāpaṇa*, also called *Purāṇa* or *Dharaṇa*, was a little more than 58 grains, which is one-tenth of that of the *Nishka* or *Śatamāna* known to the Vedic texts. The weight and relative value of coins seem to have varied in different localities.

Religion

From the point of view of religion, the early days of the Magadhan ascendancy were among the most eventful in Indian history. Great changes took place within the fold of Brāhmanism. Old ideas changed. New ones sprang into vigorous life. Popular cults and beliefs obtained recognition at the hands of the upper classes, and humanitarian and theistic movements gathered force and momentum as popular faith in animal sacrifice and barren ritual tended to diminish with the growth of free speculation presaged in the Upanishads. Outside the Brāhmanical Holy Land, spiritual leadership passed from the hands of priestly theologians and sacrificers to ascetics and wanderers (*Śramaṇa*, *Parivrājaka*) who laid the utmost stress on non-injury to living beings and the cessation of craving for the things of the world.

Greek references to the worship of Zeus Ombrios (Zeus of the rain-storms) probably suggest that the Vedic rain-gods like Indra and Parjanya were still honoured in North-West India. It is to be noted that the deities in question figure prominently in the ritual of the *Grihya Sūtras*. Parjanya finds mention also in the Buddhist *Suttantas*, which probably describe conditions in the

north-east, but the place of Indra was there occupied by Śakra who is co-partner with Brahmā in the lordship over the gods. Brāhmanical texts refer to the growing popularity of Vaiśravaṇa, Kumāra (Kārttikeya), and the goddesses Umā-Haimavatī and Vāsini who are regarded as different aspects of Durgā, the mother-goddess, consort of Śiva. Side by side with these divinities appear the spirits dwelling in waters, herbs, trees, etc. The mention of Vaiśravaṇa points to the influence of the *Yaksha* cult, the popularity of which is attested both by epic and Buddhist evidence. The cult of trees and of water deities like the Ganges is noted by Curtius and Strabo, and the idea of the *Kalpa-vriksha*, the tree which will give a man all he wants, occurs prominently in literature, including that of the Jains.

Most of the deities are now thoroughly anthropomorphised and become quite human in dress, talk and action. With the growth of anthropomorphism came the increased use of images and the construction of temples for daily service. Icons were known to the ancient people of the lower Indus valley, and stray allusions to images have been traced in some Vedic texts. But the first undoubted historical reference to image-worship by an Aryan tribe occurs in a passage of Curtius, who states that an image of Herakles was carried in front of the Paurava army as it advanced against Alexander. Patanjali refers to the exhibition and sale of images of Śiva, Skanda, and Viśākha by the Mauryas who rose to power at the end of our period. Temples of a primitive kind are mentioned already in the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, but these were not meant for iconic worship. In the epic, however, we have clear references to temples sacred to deities.

Blood sacrifices were sometimes offered to some of the gods, but all our authorities bear testimony to a new feeling of pity for living beings. The *Mahābhārata* refers to the rescue by Pāṇdu princes, led by Kṛishṇa, of hundreds of kings who were kept for sacrifice in the fortress of Girivraja "as mighty elephants are kept in mountain caves by the lion". The *Grihya Sūtras* prescribe rules for the substitution of images of meal at a sacrifice for real living creatures. Greek and Latin observers note that Brāhmaṇas do not eat the flesh of animals which help man in his labours. The remark undoubtedly confirms the Indian evidence regarding the growing feeling of reverence for the cow. The doctrine of *Ahimsā* or non-injury was specially inculcated by the ascetics and wanderers who had great influence over the people especially in Eastern India. An interesting glimpse of the ascetics of Taxila

is afforded by the account of Onesikritos who accompanied Alexander to that city in 326 B.C.

Among the most important religious concepts of the period, a prominent place should be assigned to the doctrines of *Samśāra* and *Karma*, i.e. belief in repeated transmigration and the Law of the Deed. The whole world is conceived as a "perpetual process of creation, destruction and re-birth filling eternity with an everlasting rhythm", and the entire scheme is placed under the Law of *Karma* which secures that every individual shall reap the fruit of deeds performed in antecedent existences. The operation of the Law might, however, be modified by the grace (*prasāda*) of the Lord, the Ordainer (*Īśvara*, *Dhātṛi*), combined with the loving faith (*Bhakti*) of the worshipper. This new doctrine is preached among others by the Vāsudevakas, later called *Bhāgavatas*. They teach *Bhakti* in Vāsudeva, also known as Kṛishṇa Devakiputra, who is identified in an Arāṇyaka with Viṣṇu and Narāyaṇa. He is represented as preaching the doctrines of *nishkāma Karma* (deed done without seeking any reward) and loving faith (*Bhakti*) in a God of Grace (*prasāda*). The religious and philosophical views of his followers are expounded in the *Bhagavad Gītā* which forms part of the sixth book of the *Mahābhārata*. *Bhaktas* of Vāsudeva were known to Pāṇini, and are probably to be identified with the worshippers of the Indian Herakles whose cult was specially popular with the Śūrasenas of Mathurā in the fourth century B.C.

Rival sects also make their appearance, the most notable being the devotees of Śiva, later called the Śiva-Bhāgavatas, Māheśvaras or Pāśupatas. In one of the later Upanishads—the Śvetāśvatara—Śiva is the lord (Īśa or Īśāna) of the universe—the *Bhagavat* or the Blessed One, the object of devotion to the faithful. By devoting oneself to him, ignorance is dispelled, the nooses of death are snapped and eternal peace is attained.

The new theistic sects, though preserving their distinct individuality, did not break away altogether from Brāhmanism, and attempts at a synthesis were made in the epics and later literature whereby the gods of the Bhāgavatas and the Pāśupatas or Śiva-Bhāgavatas were recognised as emanations of the supreme divinity of Brāhmanism. This leads to the enunciation of the doctrine of *Trimūrti* which, in its mature form, belongs to a later age.

Eastern India saw the rise of a class of wandering teachers who, though believing in the doctrine of transmigration and *Karma*, rejected the authority of the Vedas and of Vedic priests, denounced the blood sacrifices that constituted so large a part of the Brāhmanic ritual, and even denied the existence of God and

consequently the efficacy of divine grace. Right conduct, they declared, was the way of getting out of the meshes of *Karma* and *Samsāra*, and this right conduct included, among other things, the practice of *Ahimsā* or non-injury to living beings.

It is a notable fact that the greatest of the wandering teachers were, like the lord of the *Bhāgavatas*, scions of free Kshatriya clans hailing from the territory that lies on the fringe of the Brāhmaṇical Holy Land. One of them, Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, belonged to the Jñātrika clan of Kuṇḍapura or Kuṇḍagrāma, a suburb of Vaiśālī in North Bihār. The other, Gautama Buddha, was a prince of the Śākya clan of Kapilavastu near Rummindei in the Nepāl Tarai.

Mahāvīra and Jainism

The parents of Mahāvīra were Siddhārtha, a Jñātrika chief of Kuṇḍapura, and Trisālā, a Kshatriya lady related to the ruling families of Vaiśālī and Magadha. The early life of Mahāvīra is veiled in obscurity. According to the tradition of the Śvetāmbara (white-robed) Jains, he married a princess named Yaśodā. He lived for some time the life of a pious householder, but forsook the world at the age of thirty. He roamed as a naked ascetic in several countries of eastern India and practised severe penance for twelve years. For half the period he lived with a mendicant friar named Gosāla who subsequently left him and became the leader of the Ājīvika sect. In the thirteenth year of his penance, Mahāvīra repaired to the northern bank of the river Rijupālikā outside Jṛimbhikagrāma, a little-known locality in eastern India, and attained the highest spiritual knowledge called *Kevala-jñāna*. He was now a *Kevalin* (omniscient), a *Jina* (conqueror) and *Mahāvīra* (the great hero). He became the head of a sect called Nirgranthas ("free from fetters"), known in later times as Jains or followers of the Jina (conqueror). For thirty years he wandered about as a religious teacher and died at Pāvā in South Bihār at the age of seventy-two. The event is said to have happened 215 years before the Mauryas and 470 years before Vikrama. This is usually taken to refer to 528 B.C. But 468 B.C. is preferred by some modern scholars who rely on a tradition recorded by the Jaina monk Hemachandra that the interval between Mahāvīra's death and the accession of Chandragupta Maurya was 155, and not 215, years. The latter date does not accord with the explicit statement in some of the earliest Buddhist texts that Mahāvīra predeceased the Buddha. The earlier date is also beset with difficulties, and no definite conclusion is possible.

The Jainas believe that Mahāvira was not the founder of a new religious system, but the last of a long succession of twenty-four *Tīrthaṅkaras* or "ford-makers across the stream of existence". The twenty-third teacher, Pārśva, the immediate predecessor of Mahāvira, seems to have been a historical figure. He was a prince of Benares, and he enjoined on his disciples the four great vows of non-injury, truthfulness, abstention from stealing and non-attachment. To these Mahāvira added the vow of *Brahmacharya* or continence. He also emphasised the need of discarding all external things, including garments, if complete freedom from bonds is to be attained. By following the three-fold path of Right Belief, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct, souls will be released from transmigration and reach the pure and blissful abode (*Siddha Śilā*) which is the goal of Jaina aspiration. There is no place in Jainism for a supreme creative spirit. The doctrine of non-injury is given a wide extension by attributing souls not only to birds and beasts but also to plants, metals, water, etc.

According to the tradition of the *Śvetāmbara* Jainas, the original doctrine taught by Mahāvira was contained in fourteen old texts styled *Pūrvas*. Towards the close of the fourth century B.C., when a famine in South Bihār led to the exodus of an important section of the Jainas, headed by Bhadrabāhu, to the Mysore country, those that remained behind in Pāṭaliputra convoked a council with a view to reviving the knowledge of the sacred texts which was passing into oblivion. The result was the compilation of the twelve *Aṅgas* which are regarded as the most important part of the Jaina canon. Another council was held at Valabhī in Gujarāt in the fifth or sixth century A.D. which made a final collection of the scriptures and reduced them to writing. The complete canon included not only the *Aṅgas*, but sundry other treatises styled *Upāṅga*, *Mūla Sūtra*, etc.

The followers of Bhadrabāhu, on their return to the north, refused to acknowledge the canon as drawn up by their co-religionists at home, who came to be known as *Śvetāmbaras* (clad in white) as they wore white garments notwithstanding the injunctions of Mahāvira. Those who continued to follow scrupulously the directions of the famous Jñātrika teacher regarding nudity, came to be called *Digambaras* (sky-clad or naked). The division of the Jaina Church into these two sects is at least as old as the first century A.D. But it may be much older, and some scholars find in the followers of Pārśva, the *Tīrthaṅkara* who immediately preceded Mahāvira, the precursors of the *Śvetāmbaras* of later ages.

Gautama Buddha

Among the notable contemporaries of Mahāvira was a wandering teacher who belonged to the Śākya clan of Kapilavastu in the Nepāl Tarai to the north of the Basti district of the Uttar Pradesh. His name was Siddhārtha and he belonged to the Gautama *gotra* or family. He was born in the village of Lumbinigrāma near Kapilavastu about the year 566 B.C. according to the system of chronology adopted in these pages. The site of his nativity is marked by the celebrated Rummindeī Pillar of Aśoka Maurya. He was the son of Śuddhodana, a Rājā or noble of Kapilavastu, and of Māyā, a princess of Devadaha, a small town in the Śākya territory. Māyā died in child-birth and the little Siddhārtha was brought up by his aunt and stepmother P(r)ajāpatī Gautamī. At the age of sixteen the prince was married to a lady known to tradition as Bhadda Kachchānā, Yaśodharā, Subhadrakā, Bimbā or Gopā, whom some authorities represent as a niece of Māyā. After his marriage, Siddhārtha grew up amidst the luxurious surroundings of the palace till at last the vision of old age, disease and death made him realise the hollowness of worldly pleasure. He felt powerfully attracted by the calm serenity of the passion-less recluse, and the birth of a son, Rāhula, made him decide to leave his home and family at once. The Great Renunciation took place when Siddhārtha reached the age of twenty-nine. For six years he lived as a homeless ascetic, seeking instruction under two religious teachers and visiting many places including Rājagṛīha, in the Patna district, and Uruvilva, near Gayā. At Uruvilva he practised the most rigid austerities only to find that they were of no help to him in reaching his goal. He then took a bath in the stream of the river Nairanjanā, modern Lilajan, and sat under a *pipal* tree at modern Bodh-Gayā. Here at last he attained unto supreme knowledge and insight and became known as the *Buddha* or the Enlightened One, Tathāgata ("he who had attained the truth") and Śākya-muni or the sage of the Śākya clan.

The Enlightened One now proceeded to the Deer Park near Sarnath in the neighbourhood of Benares and began to preach his doctrine. For forty-five years he roamed about as a wandering teacher and proclaimed his gospel to the princes and people of Oudh, Bihār and some adjoining territories. He laid the foundation of the Buddhist Order of monks (*Saṅgha*) and received important gifts of groves and monasteries from friendly rulers and citizens. Among his converts was his cousin Devadatta who subsequently broke away from him and founded a rival sect that survived in parts of Oudh and Western Bengal till the Gupta period. The

Buddha is said to have died at the age of eighty at Kuśinagara, modern Kasia in the Gorakhpur district of the Uttar Pradesh. The date of his Great Decease (*Parinirvāṇa*) is a subject of keen controversy. If the Ceylonese tradition that 218 years intervened between the *Parinirvāṇa* and the consecration of *Priyadarśana* (Aśoka) has any value, the date cannot be far removed from 486 B.C., the starting-point of the famous "dotted record" at Canton.

Buddha taught his followers the four "Noble Truths" (*Ārya Satya*) concerning suffering, the cause of suffering, the destruction of suffering and the way that leads to the destruction of sorrow. That way did not lie either in habitual practice of sensuality or in habitual practice of self-torture. There was a "Middle Path" called the "Noble Eightfold-path", that is to say, Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Contemplation. This was the path that "opened the eyes, bestowed understanding, led to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvāṇa". Nirvāṇa literally means "the blowing out" or extinction of craving, of the desire for existence in all its forms, and the consequent cessation of suffering. But it is not mere extinction. It is a tranquil state to be realised by one who "from all craving want was free".

In his last exhortation to his disciples just on the eve of his death, the Buddha said, "Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your salvation with diligence (*apramāda*)."

The striving for salvation requires in the first place the observance of the *Śīlas* or Moralities, that is to say, abandonment of killing, stealing, incontinence, falsehood, slander, luxury, hankering for wealth, performance of blood sacrifices, and sundry other practices. The next requisite is *Samādhi* or concentration, and finally *Prajñā* or insight. These ultimately lead to *Sambodhi* (enlightenment) and *Nirvāṇa*.

The Buddhists shared with their fellow-countrymen of other persuasions, including the Brāhmanical Hindus and the Jainas, the belief in *Samsāra* (transmigration) and *Karma* (retribution for the deed done). Like the Jainas, they rejected the authority of the Vedas, condemned blood sacrifices, denied or doubted the existence of a supreme creative spirit, and inculcated reverence for saints who, from their point of view, attained to supreme knowledge. But unlike the followers of the Jñātrika teacher they did not acknowledge a permanent entity or an immortal soul, were not convinced of the efficacy of discarding garments, and considered

rigid penance to be as useless as indulgence in sensual pleasure. The disciples of Mahāvīra on the other hand, endowed even plants, metals, water and air with souls and gave a wide extension to the doctrine of non-violence. They considered all external things, including garments, to be an impediment to spiritual progress, and believed that the ideal man should lead a life of rigid austerities, putting up with all sorts of torments and tribulations, never seeking any relief. The saints and prophets of Jainism were of a different type from the saints and prophets of Buddhism, and the Jainas did not altogether dispense with the worship of the old deities or the services of the Brāhmaṇas.

Buddhist Scriptures

The unanimous tradition of all Buddhist schools records that shortly after the death of the Master a great Council (*Śaṅgīti*) was held at Rājagṛha to compile the *Dharma* (religious doctrine) and the *Vinaya* (monastic code). A century later a dispute arose regarding the code of discipline as the monks of Vaiśālī wanted a relaxation of the rules in respect of ten points. A second council was convoked at Vaiśālī which condemned the ten heresies and revised the scriptures. A fresh condemnation of heresy is said to have taken place in the reign of Aśoka Maurya, under whose patronage a third council was summoned at Pāṭaliputra by a learned monk, Tissa Moggaliputta, 236 years after the death of the Buddha, to make a final compilation of the scriptures. The council of Pāṭaliputra was probably not a plenary assembly of all Buddhists, but a party meeting of the school of *Vibhajjavādins*. A fourth council was held under Kanishka which prepared elaborate commentaries (*Upadeśa Śāstras* and *Vibhāṣhā Śāstras*) on the sacred texts. This council was also not a general assembly but probably a gathering of only the *Hinayānists* of Northern India.

The tradition about some of the earlier councils is not accepted by all scholars. But the unanimity of tradition about the first two assemblies and Aśoka's decrees against heretical monks indicate that there must have been a substratum of truth behind the stories narrated by the Chroniclers. The canon as we have it at present may not be as old as the first or even the second council. One text, the *Kathāvatthu*, is admittedly a work of the third century B.C. But quotations from scriptures in the Aśokan edicts, and references to persons well read in the sacred texts in inscriptions of the second century B.C., suggest that works on doctrine and

discipline were current before the rise of the Maurya and Śuṅga dynasties, though such works may not be exactly identical with any of the extant texts. According to the Ceylonese tradition, the sacred texts and commentaries were written down in books in the first century B.C. during the reign of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya. In the fifth century A.D. the texts, as distinguished from the commentaries, came to be known as *Pāli*. The use of the term *Pāli* to denote the *language* in which the texts were written is not warranted by any early evidence. The *language* was called *Māgadhānām Nirutti* or the idiom of the people of Magadha, which was probably a dialect spoken in Magadha in the early days of Buddhism and which had ceased to be the current speech in the days of Aśoka who used a somewhat different idiom in his inscriptions.

The *Pāli* Canon is divided into three *Piṭakas* or baskets, viz. the *Sutta*, the *Vinaya*, and the *Abhidhamma*. The first consists of five *Nikāyas* or collections of *Suttas* or *Suttantas*, i.e. religious discourses. The second contains rules of monastic discipline, and the third contains disquisitions of a philosophical character. The fifth *Nikāya* of the *Sutta-Piṭaka* includes the famous *Dhammapaṇḍa*, the psalms of the brethren and of the sisters (*Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*) and the still more celebrated *Jātakas* or Buddhist Birth Stories. The extant *Jātaka* commentaries belong to a period much later than the rise of the Maurya dynasty, but the original stories are fairly old and are often illustrated in bas-reliefs of the second and first centuries B.C. They were apparently not so well-known in the second as in the first century B.C. The *Jātakas* belong to a class of literature which foreshadows the epic, and there are indications that the epic itself was assuming coherent shape during the early days of the Magadhan ascendancy.

The Beginnings of Epic Poetry

In Vedic literature we come across lays in praise of heroes and tales about the deeds of princes and sages. These hero-lauds (*gāthā nārāśamsī*) and narrative stories (*ākhyāna*) formed an important feature of great sacrifices like the *Rājasūya* (royal consecration) and the *Aśvamedha* (horse-sacrifice). In the horse-sacrifice, a priest recited the *pariplava ākhyāna* (circling narrative) and tales of ancient kings, while a Kshatriya lute-player (*viṇā-gāthīn*) sang to the lute extempore verses which referred to victories connected with the sacrifice. Among such sacrificers were many kings of the Kuru and Kosala realms. It is, therefore, not sur-

prising that some of the most famous lays and tales found in the Vedic texts celebrated the benevolence and prowess of Kuru kings like Parikshit and Janamejaya, and of Ikshvāku and Kosalan monarchs like Hariśchandra and Para Ātñāra. The narration of the Ākhyāna of the Ikshvāku Hariśchandra formed a part of the ritual of the *Rājasūya*, and another rite of the same sacrifice was connected with an important episode of Kuru history. The popularity of such stories is attested by Buddhist scriptures, and the Buddha strongly reprobated the practice of narrating tales of kings, of war, and of terror, in which certain Brāhmaṇas and even ascetics indulged. Some of the Ikshvāku and Kuru lays and tales centred round heroes not explicitly mentioned in the extant Vedic texts. One such story, that of Daśaratha and his son Rāma of the Ikshvāku family, is alluded to in the *Jātaka gāthās* and illustrated in bas-reliefs of the second century B.C. Another tale, that of the Pāṇḍus, is also known to the *Jātaka gāthās* and is hinted at by Greek writers of the fourth century B.C. in the confused legends about the Indian Herakles and Pandia. Moreover, it is alluded to by the grammarians Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali. The last-mentioned writer also shows some acquaintance with the Kiśkindhyā episode of the Rāma story. It is, however, difficult to say when the ballads about Rāma's adventures or the Pāṇḍus' victory first assumed the form of a full-fledged heroic *Kāvya* or epic. The names of Vālmiki and Vyāsa, son of Parāśara, the reputed authors of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Pāṇḍu epic, the *Mahābhārata*, seem to occur in certain later Vedic or Vedāṅga texts. But the first dated reference to the *Rāmāyaṇa* as an epic is contained in the works of Buddhist and Jaina writers of the earliest centuries of the Christian era. But even then it contained only 12,000 verses, i.e. only half of its present size. The *Mahābhārata* is first mentioned by Āśvalāyana in his *Grihya Sūtra* and by Pāṇini in his *Ashtādhyāyī*. It was admittedly at first only about a quarter of its present size. The complete *Mahābhārata* of 100,000 verses is mentioned for the first time in an inscription of the Gupta period. By the sixth century A.D. the fame of both the epics had spread to far-off Cambodia. Both the poems contain a good deal of pseudo-epic or didactic material which came to be included at a comparatively late date. The genuine epic refers to a powerful Magadha military State with its capital at Girivraja. There is no reference to Pāṭaliputra. This probably points to a date before the later Haryanka-Śaśunāga kings for the early epic. The age of the epic cannot be pushed much farther back because the knowledge, however inadequate, of Southern India

beyond the Godāvari, and of Eastern India beyond the land of the Puṇḍras and the Vaṅgas, betrays a geographical outlook that is distinctly wider than that of the entire Vedic canon and the early Buddhist Nikāyas. Of the two ancient Sanskrit epics the *Rāmāyaṇa* is alluded to in, and was probably completed before, the extant *Mahābhārata*. But while the *Mahābhārata* was known to Āśvalāyana and Pāṇini, there is no similar early reference to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The latter epic, moreover, mentions Janamejaya and "Viṣṇu who upraised a mountain with his hands", i.e. probably Kṛishṇa. The latest books refer to Vāsudeva of the Yadu family and his close associate, the incarnation of Nara, i.e. Arjuna.

The nucleus of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the story of Rāma, the eldest son of Daśaratha, a prince of the Ikshvāku family of Ayodhyā in the Fyzabad district of Uttar Pradesh. The prince married Sītā, the daughter of Janaka, king of Videha in North Bihār. Owing to a palace intrigue, the Ikshvāku prince had to leave his home and go into exile for a period of fourteen years. He repaired to the Daṇḍaka forest in the Deccan with his wife and faithful half-brother Lakshmaṇa. He dwelt for some time on the banks of the Godāvari in Pañchavaṭī, which is usually identified with Nāsik. Here he came into conflict with the *Rākshasas* or cannibal chieftains who were a source of disturbance to the peaceful hermits of the locality. Among the hostile chieftains were some persons closely related to Rāvaṇa, the mighty king of Laṅkā (Ceylon). That potentate avenged his injured relations by carrying off Sītā, wife of Rāma, to his island home. In their distress, the Ikshvāku princes allied themselves with Sugrīva, Hanumān and other monkey chiefs of Kishkindhyā in the Bellary district of South India and crossed over to Laṅkā. They killed the *Rākshasa* king with most of his clan and rescued the princess Sītā. As the period of Rāma's exile was now over, he returned with his wife and brother to Ayodhyā where he was warmly received by his half-brother Bharata in whose favour he had been made to relinquish his rights. Meanwhile people came to question the propriety of taking back a princess who had long been kept confined by a *Rākshasa* king. To silence the unreasonable clamour of the multitude, Rāma had to banish his faithful consort, the ideal of Indian womanhood. The duty of a *Rājā*, according to Hindu notions, was always to please his subjects who were his "children". The virtuous royal lady found a shelter in the hermitage of Vālmiki, where she gave birth to the twins, Kuśa and Lava, who subsequently returned to their ancestral home and succeeded to their heritage.

It is difficult to say if there is any kernel of historical truth

underneath this tale of a prince's adventures in the land of cannibals and monkeys. Rāma and Sītā are names met with in the Vedic literature, though not always as appellations of human beings. They are, however, in no way connected in the Vedic texts with the illustrious lines of the Ikshvākus or the Videhas. The name of Rāvaṇa is absolutely unknown to Brāhmaṇical or non-Brāhmaṇical literature till we come to the epics themselves or to works like the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra*, which show acquaintance with the epics. It is, however, possible that Ikshvāku princes played a leading part in the colonisation of the Far South of India, as names of Ikshvāku kings figure prominently in the early inscriptions of Southern India. Whether the name of Ikshvāku was first popularised in the south by princes from Ayodhyā or by followers of the Śākya teacher of Kapilavastu, who also claimed Ikshvāku descent, must remain an open question.

The kernel of the *Mahābhārata* seems to be the victory of the Pāṇḍus, helped by Kṛishṇa and the Pañchālas, over the Kurus proper, the sons of Dhṛitarāshṭra Vaichitravīrya, a king mentioned already in the *Kāthaka* recension of the *Yajur Veda*. The epic is often mentioned as the "tale of victory" (*Jayanāma itihāsa*). Of the leading figures on the side of the victors the name of one, Kṛishṇa, son of Vasudeva and Devakī, is mentioned in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* and the latest book of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*. In the latter text he is identified with the god Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa. The name of another victor, Arjuna, is alluded to in the Vājasaneyi recension of the *Yajur Veda* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. In the *Brāhmaṇa* he is identified with Indra, and in the epic he is the son of Indra. But the *Brāhmaṇa* identification of Arjuna with Indra is on a par with the identification in the *Āraṇyaka* of Vāsudeva, i.e. Kṛishṇa, son of Vasudeva, with Viṣṇu, and cannot be adduced to support the view that he was from the beginning nothing but a Brāhmaṇic god. The ruin of the Kurus is hinted at in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* and one of the *Śrauta Sūtras*. Among their principal enemies were the *Sriṅjayas*, and the Kuru hostility to this people is alluded to in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

According to the story related in the *Mahābhārata*, King Vichitravīrya of Hāstinapura, in the Kuru country, identified with a place in the Meerut district, had sons named Dhṛitarāshṭra and Pāṇḍu. Dhṛitarāshṭra was born blind and hence Pāṇḍu succeeded to the throne. He died in the lifetime of his elder brother, leaving five sons, Yudhisṭhira, Bhimasena, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Dhṛitarāshṭra had more than a hundred

children, of whom the eldest was Duryodhana. The sons of Pāṇḍu married Draupadī, daughter of the king of Pañchāla. The third prince, Arjuna, married also Subhadra, sister to Kṛishṇa who belonged to the powerful Yādava confederacy of Mathurā and Dvārakā (in Kāthiāwār). The Pāṇḍus claimed a share of their paternal kingdom. They were given the Khāṇḍava forest to the south of the Kuru kingdom, where they built the stately city of Indraprastha near modern Delhi. At the instance of Kṛishṇa they overthrew Jarāsandha, the powerful king of Magadha, who was seeking to establish his own supremacy. The Magadhan ruler had carried off hundreds of princes as prisoners to the fastness of Girivraja with a view to offering them as victims in a horrid rite. The Pāṇḍus now effected conquests in all directions and laid claim to the rank of paramount rulers, performing the *Rājasūya*, which was now a sacrifice of imperial inauguration. The prosperity of their rivals roused the jealousy of the sons of Dhṛitarāshṭra. They invited Yudhisṭhira, the eldest among the Pāṇḍu princes, to a game of dice, secured his defeat, and sought to enslave Draupadī. The Pāṇḍu queen was dragged to the open court and there subjected to the grossest insults. The Pāṇḍus were next sent into exile for a period of thirteen years. At the end of the period the five brothers demanded the return of their kingdom but met with a refusal. Thereupon the rival cousins engaged in a deadly conflict on the field of Kurukshetra. The Kuru host, led by Bhishma, Droṇa, Karṇa and other mighty warriors, was destroyed. The Pāṇḍus with their allies, the Pañchālas and Śrīñjayas, also suffered terrible losses, but they succeeded in gaining back their kingdom.

Although there is no clear reference in the extant Vedic texts to the battle of Kurukshetra, we have distinct hints in some of the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Upanishads* and *Śrauta Sūtras* of the hostility between the Kurus and the Śrīñjayas, the disasters threatening the Kurus and their final expulsion from Kurukshetra. The name Pāṇḍu is not mentioned in Vedic literature, but we have references to Arjuna, Parikshit and Janamejaya, and the first two have already been deified in some of the later Vedic texts. That the Pāṇḍus were a historic tribe or clan is proved by the testimony of Ptolemy in whose time they occupied a portion of the Punjab.

Both the Kurus and the Pāṇḍus are frequently represented by epic bards as violating the knightly code of honour. The unchivalrous deeds of the Pāṇḍus are often attributed by the Kuru chronicler to the instigation of Kṛishṇa, just as the misdeeds of Ajātashatru are ascribed by Buddhist writers to Devadatta, the schismatic cousin of the Buddha. The Buddha himself is accused

by Purāṇic chroniclers of having beguiled the demons. The Bhāgavatas, the followers of Kṛishṇa, were not regarded as quite orthodox even in the time of Śaṅkarāchārya, and that may account for the attitude that a section of the Kuru bards adopted towards the Yādava chief, whom they regarded as a *vrātya* (outside the pale). It is difficult to believe that the great poets, philosophers and devoted worshippers who produced the *Bhagavad Gītā* and laid the utmost stress on the virtues of *dama* (self-restraint), *tyāga* (renunciation) and *apramāda* (vigilance) in an inscription of the second century B.C., could have been aware of the dark deeds that are attributed to their lord and his closest associates in battle-songs that find a place in the extant epic. That some of the battle-books were revised at a later period is proved by references to the Yavanas and the Śakas.

The *Mahābhārata* is not merely a "song of victory", it is a *Purāṇa-Saṁhitā*, a collection of old legends, and an *Itihāsa* or traditional account of high-souled kings and pious sages, of dutiful wives and beautiful maids. We have charming and edifying stories like those of Śakuntalā and Sāvitrī, of Nala and Śibi. Side by side with these we have the thrilling lays of Ambā and Vidulā. In the first book the epic claims to be a *Śāstra* or authoritative manual laying down rules of conduct for the attainment of *trivarga* or the three great aims animating all human conduct, *Dharma* (moral and religious duties), *Artha* (material wealth) and *Kāma* (pleasures of the flesh). Finally it claims to be a *Moksha-śāstra* pointing the way of salvation to mankind. Manuals of a didactic character are chiefly found in the later books. Among the religious poems that form part of the epic, the most famous is the *Bhagavad Gītā* or the "Song of the Lord", which constitutes the bed-rock of Hindu theism.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAURYA EMPIRE

Chandragupta Maurya

IN 326 B.C. India was faced with a crisis. The imperial crown of Magadha and the neighbouring provinces was worn by a king who was "detested and held cheap" by his own people. The Land of the Five Rivers was overrun by the Macedonians and allied peoples from the West who resolved to incorporate it permanently into their growing empire. Alexander, the great leader of the invading bands, withdrew, it is true, to the city of Babylon in Mesopotamia, where he died in 323 B.C. Philippos, the satrap whom he had appointed to govern the Western Punjab, met his doom in 324 B.C. But the surviving commanders, who met to partition the Macedonian empire in 323 B.C. and again in 321 B.C., had no desire to withdraw altogether from the conquered territories in the Indian borderland. The civil government of the districts to the east of the Indus had to be left virtually in the hands of Indian princes. Macedonian governors were retained in the trans-Indus satrapies, and an officer, named Eudemos, was appointed to command the garrison in the Western Punjab after the murder of Philippos. The successors of Alexander were, however, torn by internal dissensions and had to recall some of their commandants in India. The indigenous population had, in the meantime, found a leader who knew how to take advantage of the disunion and the thinned ranks of the foreign invaders and "shake the yoke of servitude from the neck" of his fatherland.

Signs of disaffection against foreign rule appeared in the Indian borderland as early as 326 B.C. when the Macedonian king was still in the Punjab. A formidable rising followed in the lower Indus valley which was fomented by the Brāhmanas of the locality. But all these insurrections seem to have been crushed, and the hand of the invader fell heavily on the instigators. Retribution came quickly and, if tradition is to be believed, it was a Taxilian Brāhmaṇa named Chāṇakya or Kauṭilya who raised to power the great avenger to whose mighty arms "the earth, long harassed by outlanders, now turned for protection and refuge"

The new Indian leader was a young man who bore the name of Chandragupta. He is described by Justin as a man of humble origin who was prompted to aspire to regal power by an omen significant of an august destiny, immediately after an encounter with Alexander himself. The visit to the Macedonian king is referred to by Plutarch as well as Justin, but, strange to say, some modern writers emend the text of Justin and propose to read "Nandrum" (Nanda) in place of "Alexandrum" (Alexander). Such conjectural emendations are hardly justified.

The family to which the young leader belonged is named Maurya by Indian writers, and is identified by some with the tribe of Morieis mentioned by the Greeks. According to one tradition the designation is derived from Murā, the mother or grandmother of Chandragupta, who was the wife of a Nanda king. Mediaeval epigraphs, on the other hand, represent the Mauryas as Kshatriyas of the solar race. Buddhist writers of an early date also knew them as members of the Kshatriya caste and referred to them as the ruling clan of the little republic of Pippalivana, probably lying between Rummidei in the Nepalese Tarai and Kasai in the Gorakhpur district, in the days of the Buddha. The cognomen *Vrishala* applied to Chandragupta in the Sanskrit play called the *Mudrārākshasa* does not invariably mean a man of *Sūdra* extraction. It is also used of Kshatriyas and others who deviated from rules enjoined in Brāhmaṇical scriptures. That Chandragupta did deviate from Brāhmaṇical orthodoxy is proved by his predilection shown for Jainism in his later years.

The Maurya clan was reduced to great straits in the fourth century B.C., and tradition avers that Chandragupta grew up among peacock-tamers, herdsmen, and hunters. While still a lad he is said to have met Alexander in the Punjab, but, having offended the king by his boldness of speech, and orders being given to kill him, he saved himself by a speedy flight. In the place of his refuge he is said to have been joined by a personage who had left his home in Taxila. This was the famous Chāṇakya or Kauṭilya, who went at first to Pāṭaliputra but, being insulted by the reigning Nanda king, repaired to the Vindhya forest where he met Chandragupta. With the help of treasure found underground he gathered an army for the young Maurya. Greek and Latin writers do not mention Kauṭilya but allude to Chandragupta's encounter with a lion and an elephant, which accords well with his residence in the Vindhyan wilds, and refer to the collection of a body of armed men who are characterised as a band of robbers by some modern historians. But the original expression used by Justin, to whom

we owe the account of the rise of Chandragupta, has the sense of "mercenary soldier" as well as that of "robber". The former sense is in consonance with Jaina tradition.

Having collected an army, Chandragupta "solicited the Indians to support his new sovereignty", or, according to another interpretation, "instigated the Indians to overthrow the existing government". *Thereafter (deinde)* he went to war with the prefects of Alexander and fought vigorously with them. Chandragupta acquired the throne when Seleukos, a general of Alexander, was laying the foundations of his future greatness. Seleukos obtained as his share of Alexander's empire the satrapy of Babylon, first after the agreement of Triparadeisos (321 B.C.) and afterwards in 312 B.C., from which year his era is dated. In 306 B.C. he assumed the title of king. As Chandragupta had acquired the throne when Seleukos was on the threshold of his career, his accession took place certainly before 306 B.C. and probably before 312 B.C. It may have taken place even before 321 B.C. The Buddhist tradition of Ceylon puts the date 162 years after the *Parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, i.e. in 382 B.C. if we take 544 B.C. to be the year of the Great Decease and 324 B.C. if we prefer the Cantonese date 486 B.C. for the death of the Buddha. The earlier date is opposed to Greek evidence and is clearly untenable. The date 324 B.C. accords with the testimony of Greek writers.

The first Maurya is known to have been in possession of Mālwa and Kāthiāwār. The Jaina date, 313 B.C., if based on a correct tradition, may refer to his acquisition of Avanti (Mālwa). Westward of Avanti, Chandragupta's rule extended as far as Surāshṭra in which was stationed a *Vaiśya* official (*rāshṭriya*) named Pushyagupta. Tamil tradition refers to the advance of "Maurya upstarts" as far south as the Tinnevely district. But the achievement is attributed by certain scholars to the Mauryas of the Konkan who belong to a much later date. Even if the earlier Mauryas had really pushed on to Tinnevely they must have withdrawn from this region within a short time, because the southern frontier of the Maurya empire in the days of Aśoka, grandson of Chandragupta, did not extend beyond the Chitaldrug district of Mysore, and the Pāṇḍya realm which included the Tinnevely district is referred to in the edicts of that emperor as a frontier kingdom.

Towards the close of the reign of Chandragupta, the Maurya empire received a further extension in the north-west. Seleukos, the general of Alexander, who had made himself master of Babylon, gradually extended his empire from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus and even tried to regain the provinces to the east of

that river. He failed and had to conclude a treaty with Chandragupta by which he surrendered a large territory including, in the opinion of certain writers, the satrapies of Paropanisadai (Kābul), Aria (Herāt), Arachosia (Qandahār), and Gedrosia (Baluchistān), in return for 500 elephants. The inclusion of a part at least of the Kābul valley within the Maurya empire is attested by the evidence of the Aśokan inscriptions. The treaty was probably cemented by a marriage contract. A Greek envoy was accredited to the Court of Pātaliputra.

If Jaina tradition is to be believed, Chandragupta was converted to the religion of Mahāvira. He is said to have abdicated his throne and passed his last days at Śravaṇa Belgola in Mysore. Greek evidence, however, suggests that the first Maurya did not give up the performance of sacrificial rites and was far from following the Jaina creed of *Ahimsā* or non-injury to animals. He took delight in hunting, a practice that was continued by his son and was also alluded to by his grandson Aśoka in the eighth Rock Edict. It is, however, possible that in his last days he showed some predilection for Jainism just as Harsha in the seventh century A.D., though officially a Śaiva, paid respect to the Buddha and the Buddhist Master of the Law.

Bindusāra

The successor of Chandragupta Maurya was his son Bindusāra apparently called *Amitraghātā*, "slayer of foes", by Greek writers. He probably reigned from c. 300 B.C. to c. 273 B.C.

Bindusāra seems to have retained undiminished the empire of his father. Tradition credits him with the suppression of a revolt in Taxila. Whether he effected any new conquests is not known for certain. His empire must have embraced not only the greater part of northern India but also a considerable portion of the Deccan, probably as far south as the Chitaldrug district of Mysore. The kingdom of Kalinga, embracing the major part of Puri, Ganjam and some adjoining tracts, is known, however, to have been independent.

In foreign affairs Bindusāra maintained the friendly relations with the Hellenic West established by his father. He received as ambassador a Greek named Deimachos and curious anecdotes have been preserved of private friendly correspondence between him and Antiochos I Soter, king of Syria, son of Seleukos Nikator.

Bindusāra had many children, both sons and daughters. One of the sons, Aśoka, seems to have held successively the important

viceroyalties of Taxila and Ujjain. Tradition avers that when the emperor fell sick Aśoka left the government of Ujjain and came to Pāṭaliputra, the imperial capital. When his father died, he seized the sovereignty of the city, and put his eldest brother to death. He is said to have slain ninety-nine brothers born of different mothers. In the fifth Rock Edict, however, which was issued not earlier than the fourteenth regnal year, Aśoka refers to the harems of his brothers which were objects of his anxious care. This has been taken to indicate that the story of the slaughter of the brothers is a silly fiction, but we have to remember that the formal consecration of Aśoka was very probably delayed. This suggests a disputed succession. The fifth Rock Edict undoubtedly proves the existence of harems of brothers thirteen years after Aśoka's anointment, but it does not prove that the brothers themselves *without any exception* were all alive at that date. The traditional account may not be correct in all particulars, and the number of brothers killed may have been exaggerated, but that there was a fight for the crown, in the course of which the eldest brother perished, does not appear to be altogether improbable.

Aśoka

The reign of Bindusāra probably terminated in, or within a few years of, 273 B.C. Some time after—four years later according to tradition—his successor was solemnly enthroned at Pāṭaliputra and died after a reign of thirty-six or thirty-seven years, in or about 232 B.C. The name of the new king, as known from literature, and certain later epigraphs, was Aśoka. He is, however, generally mentioned in his inscriptions as Devānampiya Piyadasi. Devānampiya, "beloved of the gods", is a title which he shared with some of his predecessors, successors and contemporaries. The other appellation Piyadasi (Priyadarśin) or Piyadassana (Priyadarśana), "of amiable appearance", is said to have been borne also by his grandfather Chandragupta.

We know very little about the early years of Aśoka's reign. He must have continued the aggressive policy of his forebears. Literary tradition credits him with the suppression of a fresh revolt in Taxila, and a contemporary inscription records that when he had been anointed eight years the Kalingas were conquered by him. The conquest of this province rounded off the Maurya empire, which now embraced almost the whole of non-Tamil India and a considerable portion of Afghānistān. It stretched from the land of the Yonas, Kambojas and Gandhāras in

the Kābul valley and some adjoining mountain territory, to the country of the Andhras in the Godāvari-Kṛishṇā basin and the district (Āhāra) of Isila in the north of Mysore, and from Sopārā and Gīrnār in the west to Dhauli and Jaugaḍa in the east. In the north-west, the empire touched the realm of Antiochos II, the Greek king of Syria and Western Asia, and in the south it extended as far as the kingdom of the Choḍas, Pāṇḍyas, Satiya-putra and Keralaputra in the Tamil country. If tradition is to be believed, the dominions of Aśoka included the secluded vales of Kāshmir and Nepāl as well as the riparian plains of Puṇḍra-wardhana (North Bengal) and Samatata (East Bengal). The inclusion of the Himālayan valleys is rendered probable by the discovery of inscriptions at Mansehra in the Hazāra district, at Kālsi in the Dehra Dun district, at Nigāli Sāgar and Rummindeī in the Nepalese Tarai and at Rampurva in the Champaran district of North Bihār. But no recension of the Aśokan edicts has yet been found in Bengal, though an old Brāhmī inscription of Mahāsthān in North Bengal, which refers to the prosperous city of Puṇḍra-nagara, apparently belongs to the Pre-Christian Age.

The Kalinga war proved a turning-point in the career of Aśoka and produced results of far-reaching consequence in the history of India and of the whole eastern world. The sight of misery and bloodshed in the Kalinga campaign smote the emperor's conscience and awakened in his breast sincere feelings of repentance and sorrow. It made Aśoka intensely devoted to the practice of *Dharma* (morality and piety), the love of *Dharma* and the instruction of the people in *Dharma*. It also led to a momentous change in foreign policy. The emperor eschewed military conquest involving slaughter and deportation of people and evolved a policy of *dharma-vijaya*, "conquest by piety", in place of the old conquest by bows and arrows.

Aśoka had doubtless inherited the traditional devotion of Hindu kings to gods (*devas*) and the Brāhmaṇas, and, if the Kāshmir chronicle of Kalhaṇa is to be believed, his favourite deity was Śiva. Shortly after the Kalinga war he seems to have been greatly influenced by Buddhist teaching. He became a lay worshipper (*upāsaka*) of the Buddha, but for some time did not show much zeal for the new faith. He then went out to *Sambodhi*, taken by some to refer to Bodh-Gayā, and also established intimate relations with the Buddhist *Saṅgha* or order of monks. According to one view, he actually entered the *Saṅgha* and became a monk. Contact with the place of enlightenment of the Blessed One, and the pious fraternity that he had founded, apparently galvanised Aśoka into greater exertions for the cause of religion and morality.

His new-born zeal showed itself in many ways. He made a deep study of the Buddhist scriptures and undertook "tours of morality" (*dharma-yātrā*) in the place of the pleasure tours (*vihāra-yātrā*) of his ancestors. In the course of these tours he visited the people of the country, instructing them in *Dharma* (morality and piety) and questioning them about *Dharma*. The royal preacher was highly pleased with the result of his tour. The sovereign was no longer to be seen only among litigants, priests, soldiers, and hunters of big game. The "Beloved of the Gods" had been among the country folk lecturing on *Dharma*. He had taught them that attainment of heaven is not the monopoly of the great alone. Even a lowly person could attain heaven if he was zealous in following the ancient rule of morality. The royal tours were apparently decennial. One was undertaken when the king had been anointed ten years, and another when he had been consecrated twenty years. In course of the second tour, the emperor visited the birthplace of Śākya-muni and that of a previous Buddha, and worshipped at these holy spots.

The dominions of Aśoka were vast, and the royal preacher must have soon realised that with all his zeal it would not be possible for him alone to bring the message of *Dharma* to the doors of all his subjects in the remotest corners of his far-flung empire. When he had been anointed twelve years, that is to say within two years of his first tour, he requisitioned the services of important officials like the *Rajukas* (probably district judges and survey officers), *Prādesikas* (apparently officers in provinces charged with revenue collection and police) and *Yuktas* (clerks or secretaries). He ordered his officers to publish rescripts on morality and set out on tours every five years to give instruction in morality as well as for ordinary business. The rescripts and proclamations were to be engraved on rocks and on existing stone pillars. New "pillars of morality" (*dharma-stambha*) were also to be set up. These orders must have taxed the capacity of the officials to the utmost, and within a year the emperor felt the need of special functionaries whose sole business would be the promotion of religion. Accordingly, new officials, styled *Dharma-Mahāmātras* or high officers in charge of religion, were appointed. They were employed in the imperial capital as well as in the outlying towns and tribal territories, especially on the western and north-western border of the empire. They busied themselves with the affairs of all sects and of the people in various walks of life, including princes and princesses of the blood as well as prisoners in jail, ordinary householders and their servants as well as homeless ascetics. Reporters were posted

everywhere to keep the king informed of the doings of his officials and subjects. The moral uplift and the welfare of the country folk were specially entrusted to functionaries styled *Rajukas* who had imperial agents to guide them. Envoys went out to foreign courts so that people outside the empire might conform to morality.

The old policy of chastisement of turbulent forest tribes and troublesome neighbours, and conquest by force of arms, was given up, and a new policy of peace and forbearance, of "conquest by morality", was evolved. "The reverberation of the war-drum" (*bheri ghosha*) was to become "the reverberation of the law" (*dhamma ghosha*). Not content with what he did himself, the emperor called upon his sons and other descendants not to think of fresh conquest, but to take pleasure in mercy and light punishment, and regard the "conquest by morality" as the only true conquest. Here we have a complete reversal of the old policy pursued by the rulers of Magadha since the days of Bimbisāra. Aśoka said that his policy of *dharma-vijaya* met with phenomenal success, and he claimed to have made a spiritual conquest of the realms of his Hellenistic, Tamil and Ceylonese neighbours. His Hellenistic contemporaries were Antiochos (II, Theos of Syria, 261–246 B.C.), Ptolemy (II, Philadelphos of Egypt, 285–247 B.C.), Antigonos (Gonatas of Macedonia, 276–239 B.C.), Magas (of Cyrene, c. 300–258 B.C.) and Alexander (of Epirus, 272–c. 255 B.C., or, as some say, of Corinth, 252–c. 244 B.C.). The Maurya emperor, it is true, established philanthropic institutions in the realms of some of these princes, and Buddhism doubtless made some progress in western Asia and influenced later sects like the Manichaeans. But the Greeks apparently were not much impressed by lessons on non-violence. When the strong arm of Aśoka, "who possessed the power to punish in spite of his repentance", was withdrawn, the Greeks poured once more into the Kābul valley, the Punjab and even the Gangetic region and threw all these provinces into confusion.

The southern missions were more successful. If tradition is to be believed, the Ceylonese mission was headed by Prince Mahendra, a son or brother of Aśoka. Devānampiya Tissa, the ruler of the island kingdom, was converted and his example was followed by his subjects. Ceylonese tradition avers that missionaries were sent even to Suvarṇa-bhūmi, i.e. Lower Burma, Sumatra and possibly some adjoining lands.

Aśoka's Dharma

In one of his inscriptions, Aśoka made an open confession of his faith in the Buddha, the *Dharma* (the Buddhist doctrine) and the *Saṅgha* (the Buddhist order of monks). He called the Buddha *Bhagavat*—an epithet applied by a Hindu to the object of his loving devotion. He went on pilgrimage to the places of the Blessed One's nativity and enlightenment and worshipped at the former place. He declared that whatever had been spoken by the Buddha, all that was quite well spoken. He took much interest in the exposition of the Buddhist *Dharma* or doctrine so that it might long endure. As to the *Saṅgha*, he kept in close touch with it after his memorable visit to the fraternity a year or so after his conversion. He impressed on the clergy the need of a correct exposition of the true doctrine and appointed special officers to busy themselves with the affairs of the Brotherhood. He also took steps to maintain the integrity of the church and prevent schism within its fold. Attempts in this direction are also recorded by tradition which avers further that a council was convened during his reign to compile the scriptures. That Aśoka interested himself in Buddhist scriptures as well as monastic discipline is amply attested by contemporary records.

But with all his faith in Buddhism, Aśoka was not intolerant of other creeds. He sought, it is true, to put an end to practices and institutions that he considered to be opposed to the fundamental principles of morality which, according to him, constituted the "essence of all religions". But he never became an enemy of the *Devas* and the Brāhmaṇas, or of any other religious fraternity. He continued to style himself the "Beloved of the *Devas*". He condemned unseemly behaviour towards Brāhmaṇas and showered gifts on them as well as on the Ājīvikas, the followers of Gosāla. His *Dharma-Mahāmātrās* were told to look after all sects including even the *Nirgranthas* or the Jainas. The emperor laid special emphasis on concourse (*samavāya*) and the guarding of speech (*vachoguti*), and warned people against the evil consequences of using harsh language in respect of other sects.

Though himself convinced of the truth of Buddha's teaching, of the efficacy of worship at the Buddhist holy places, of the necessity of making a confession of faith in the Buddhist trinity, of keeping in close touch with the Buddhist *Saṅgha* and maintaining its solidarity, Aśoka never sought to impose his sectarian belief on others. The prospect that he held before the people at large is not that of *sambodhi* or *nirvāṇa* but of *svarga* (heaven)

and of mingling with the *Devas*. *Svarga* could be attained by all people, high or low, if only they showed zeal, not in adherence to a sectarian dogma or the performance of popular ritual (*maṅgala*) but in following the ancient rule (*porāṇā pakiti*), namely:

“Obedience must be rendered to mother and father, likewise to elders; firmness (of compassion) must be shown towards animals; truth must be spoken: these same moral virtues must be practised.

“In the same way the pupil must show reverence to the master, and one must behave in a suitable manner towards relatives.”

In the pillar edicts it is declared that “happiness in this world and in the other world is difficult to secure without great love of morality, careful examination, great obedience, and great fear of sin and great energy”. Prominence is also given, in the pillar edicts, to “spiritual insight”. Towards the end of his career, Aśoka seems to have been convinced that reflection and meditation were of greater efficacy than moral regulations. But the need of such regulations was keenly felt by him in the first part of his reign.

It was a characteristic of Aśoka that he practised what he preached. He inculcated the virtues of compassion, liberality and toleration. He showed his compassion by abolishing or restricting the slaughter and mutilation of animals, and making arrangements for the healing both of men and beasts. He put a stop to the massacre of living creatures to make curries in the imperial kitchen, and discontinued the royal hunt. He abolished the sacrificial slaughter of animals and regulated festive gatherings (*samāja*) so as to prevent loss of life or the practice of immorality. He provided medical herbs both for men and lower animals. His officers constructed reservoirs of water and planted trees and groves for the comfort of travellers. Special officials were sent from headquarters to check oppression in the outlying provinces. Liberality and toleration were shown by undertaking pious tours for the distribution of gifts of gold to Brāhmaṇas as well as *śramaṇas*, by making gifts of cave-dwellings even to non-Buddhist sects, and by the creation of special officers for the distribution of alms to all sects. Queens and princes were encouraged to participate in these works of charity, and at least one of the queens, Kāruvāki, readily co-operated with her consort.

The reference to cave-dwellings affords us a glimpse into another side of the emperor's activity. As late as the fifth century A.D.,

sojourners in Pāṭaliputra were struck with wonder at the magnificence of Aśoka's architectural achievements. Tradition credits him with the construction of a splendid palace besides numerous relic mounds, monasteries and temples. He is actually known to have enlarged the *stūpa* of Konākamana, a "former Buddha" and predecessor of Śākya-muni. He also set up pillars of morality (*dharma-stambha*). Modern critics are eloquent in their praise of the polished surface of his columns and the fine workmanship of their crowning sculptures, one of which, the capital of the Sarnath Pillar, has been adopted as the national emblem of Free India.

Aśoka's Character

Aśoka is one of the most remarkable personalities in the history of India. He was tireless in his exertions, and unflagging in his zeal—all directed to the promotion of the spiritual and moral welfare of his people whom he called his children. Of his energy, ability and power of organisation, there is no doubt. He was the statesman who conducted successfully a great military campaign that led to the destruction of a powerful adversary whose sway extended over a vast and populous realm. He organised, a few years later, missions for the spiritual conquest of three continents, and turned a local sect in the Ganges valley into a world religion. He preached and practised the virtues of concord, toleration and non-violence. He eschewed military conquest, not after defeat but after victory, and pursued a policy of gentleness and clemency while still possessed of the vast resources of a mighty empire. The generosity and forbearance of this strong man were only matched by his sincerity and veracity, and he describes in words at once truthful and straightforward the terrible misery that he had inflicted on the people of a hapless kingdom. The example of the pious Maurya king exercised an ennobling influence on succeeding generations. But the ruler who turned officers of state into religious propagandists, abolished the royal hunt and jousts of arms, entrusted the fierce tribesmen of the north-western and southern provinces to the tender care of preachers of morality, and did not rest till the sound of the war-drum was completely hushed and the only sound that was heard was that of religious discourses, certainly pursued a policy at which the great empire-builders who came before him would have looked askance. And it is not surprising that within a few years of his death the power that had hurled back the battalions of Seleukos proved unequal to the task of protecting the country from the princelings of Bactria.

The Later Imperial Mauryas

If Purāṇic tradition is to be believed, the immediate successor of Aśoka was his son Kunāla. The Chronicles of Kāshmir, however, do not name this prince and mention Jalauka as the son and successor of Aśoka in that valley. It is not improbable that the Maurya empire broke up after the death of Aśoka, and was divided among his sons, one of whom inherited the home provinces and another made himself independent in the north-west. Tivara, the only son named in the inscriptions, does not appear to have got a share of the patrimony. Kunāla was succeeded by his sons, one of whom, Bandhupālita, is known only in the Purāṇas, and another, Sampadi or Samprati, is mentioned by all our traditional authorities—Brāhmaṇical, Buddhist as well as Jaina, and is represented by the last as a ruler of Pāṭaliputra and Ujjain and a great patron of their faith. The Purāṇas, however, with the exception perhaps of the *Bhāgavata*, do not actually represent Samprati as a son of Kunāla, and interpose between him and Kunāla a number of princes amongst whom Daśaratha was certainly a historical figure. He ruled in Magadha shortly after Aśoka and has left three epigraphs in the Nāgārjuni Hills, Bihār recording the gifts of caves to the “venerable Ājīvikas”.

After Daśaratha and Samprati came Śāliśūka, a prince mentioned in the astronomical work, the *Gārgī Samhitā*, as a wicked quarrelsome king. “Unrighteous, although theorising on righteousness, he cruelly oppressed his country.” The successors of Śāliśūka, according to the Purāṇas, were Devavarman, Satamadhanus and Bṛihadhratha. The last prince was overthrown by his commander-in-chief, Pushyamitra, who laid the foundations of a new dynasty styled Śūṅga in the Purāṇas. There were altogether 10 (according to some accounts, 9) kings in the Maurya dynasty who ruled for 137 years (324 to 187 B.C.).

There can be no doubt that during the rule of the later Mauryas the empire suffered a gradual decay. The secession of Kāshmir and possibly of Berar is hinted at by Kalhaṇa, the historian of Kāshmir, and Kālidāsa, the author of the Sanskrit play, the *Mālavikāgnimitram*, respectively. Towards the close of the third century B.C. the Kābul valley was under a king named Subhāgasena whose title, “king of the Indians”, suggests that his territory included the Indus valley as well. As his name does not occur in any list of the later Mauryas, he may have belonged to a different family which rose to power in the north-west on the ruins of the Maurya empire. Even if he was connected with the

Maurya line, he could not have belonged to the main branch of the family ruling at Pāṭaliputra. The title given to him by the Greek historians indicates that he was an independent potentate and not a mere viceroy of Taxila. The disintegration of the empire invited invasions from without, and we are told by Polybius that Antiochos III, the Great (223–187 B.C.), grandson of Antiochos II Theos, the contemporary of Aśoka, and great-great-grandson of Seleukos I Nikator, the contemporary of Chandragupta Maurya, descended into India and received a number of elephants from Subhāgasena. If the *Gārgī Samhitā* is to be believed, a Greek army penetrated even to Pāṭaliputra.

The decline of Maurya authority is attributed by some scholars to a reaction promoted by the Brāhmaṇas whose privileged position is said to have been affected by the policy of Aśoka. But there is nothing in the records of Aśoka himself to suggest that he was an enemy of the Brāhmaṇas. On the contrary, he showed extreme solicitude for their welfare and extended his patronage to members of this community as well as to Buddhists, Jainas and Ājīvikas. One Brāhmaṇa historian, Kalhaṇa, praises him for his piety and benefactions and testifies to the friendly relations subsisting between one of his sons and the Brāhmaṇical Hindus. Another Brāhmaṇa writer, Bāṇa, applies the epithet *anārya*, ignoble, to the general who overthrew Bṛihadhratha, the last of the Imperial Mauryas. Certain Purāṇic writers, it is true, refer to the Mauryas as *asuras* or demons, and the *Gārgī Samhitā* draws pointed attention to the oppressive rule of Śāliśūka, but there is nothing to suggest that the Brāhmaṇas were the special victims of Maurya oppression, and a Brāhmaṇa appears as the commander-in-chief under the last Maurya. The epithet *asura*, demon, or *suradvish*, enemy of the gods, was applied not only to the Mauryas but to all persons “beguiled by the Buddha”. But the evidence of the Purāṇas in this respect is contradicted by that of contemporary inscriptions which refer to Aśoka and the only one among his successors who has left any epigraphic record as “*devānampiya*”, that is, “beloved (and not enemy) of the gods”.

The true cause of the Maurya debacle perhaps lies deeper. Aśoka eschewed military conquest after the Kalinga war when he had been anointed eight years, and called upon his descendants not to entertain any thought of aggressive warfare. Shortly afterwards, even the royal hunt was abolished. The army seems to have been mostly inactive during the remaining part of the reign—a period of twenty-nine years—as the emperor himself exultingly declares that “in consequence of the practice of morality on his

part, the sound of *bheri*, or the war-drum, had become the sound of morality". The ease with which the general Pushyamitra, according to the testimony of Bāṇa, overthrew his king in the very sight of the troops shows that, unlike the earlier kings of the dynasty who often took the field in person, the last of the Mauryas lost touch with his armed forces and ceased to command their affection. Great difficulty was also experienced in controlling the officials in the outlying provinces even in the days of Bindusāra and Aśoka. If tradition is to be believed, ministerial oppression had twice goaded the people of Taxila to open rebellion. The quinquennial and triennial *anusamyāna* or tour of *mahāmātras* (high officers) was specially instituted by Aśoka to check this evil. But when his strong arm was withdrawn, central control apparently became slack. Some of the outlying provinces seceded from the empire, and the process of disintegration was accelerated by members of the imperial family, some of whom set up independent sovereignties while others cruelly oppressed the country. The distracted condition of the country emboldened the Greeks to renew their incursions. The final *coup de grâce* was given by the general Pushyamitra.

A Jaina tradition fixes the date of Chandragupta's accession at 313 B.C. It is, however, difficult to reconcile this tradition with the statement of the Buddhist chroniclers of Ceylon and Burma that the coronation of Aśoka took place $24 + 27$ (or 28) $+ 4 = 55$ or 56 years after the accession of Chandragupta. The Purāṇas agree with the Buddhist chronicles in assigning a period of 24 years to Chandragupta. They give a smaller figure, 25, instead of the 28 of the Buddhist chroniclers of Ceylon and the 27 of the chroniclers of Burma, for the reign of Bindusāra and ignore the interval between the accession and coronation of Aśoka. But, as pointed out by Smith, they assign 137 years to the Maurya dynasty. The total of the lengths of reigns, according to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, is, however, only 133. The difference of four years may be accounted for by the period of interregnum before the formal coronation of Aśoka. That emperor, in the thirteenth Rock Edict, mentions certain Yavana (Hellenic) kings as being alive. This must have been written after the twelfth year from his coronation, when he caused rescripts of morality to be written apparently for the first time. Among these Yavana kings there is no reference to Diodotos I of Bactria, who rose to power in the middle of the third century B.C. Magas of Cyrene, one of the kings named by Aśoka, died, according to the best authorities, not later than 258 B.C. His successor, Demetrios the Fair, is said to have met his death in

that year. If 258 B.C. is the latest possible date for the thirteenth Rock Edict, the coronation of Aśoka must have taken place certainly not later than 269 B.C. The accession of Chandragupta must have taken place, according to Buddhist evidence, not later than $269 + 55 = 324$ B.C. and, according to the Purāṇic statements, not later than $269 + 25 + 24 = 318$ B.C., or, including the period of interregnum before Aśoka, not later than 322 B.C.

In the account of the rise of Chandragupta given by Justin, we are expressly told that the young Indian leader was stimulated to aspire to kingship by an incident that happened immediately after his flight from the camp of Alexander in 326 B.C. The use of the term *deinde* ("thereafter", "some time after") in connection with the war against the prefects of Alexander suggests that the acquiescence of Indians in a change of government and the establishment of a new sovereignty is quite distinct from the war with the Macedonian prefects. There was an interval between the two events, and the Macedonian war came some time after the change of government among Indians.

In the Sanskrit play, the *Mudrārākṣha*, too, the destruction of the *Mlechchha* (barbarian) chieftains and troops follows the dynastic revolution in the interior of India. In 321 B.C. the Macedonian governor of Sind had already been forced to retire beyond the Indus, and no new satrap had been appointed in his place. The successors of Alexander in 321 B.C. confessed their inability to remove the Indian Rājās without royal troops under the command of some distinguished general. The abandonment of Sind, the complaint about the inadequacy of troops, and the wholesome respect for the power of the Indian Rājās, must have been due to new developments in politics. Greek military power to the east of the Indus was virtually extinguished as early as 321 B.C. The result could not have been due to Āmbhi, the Paurava, or any petty Rājā who had once acknowledged the Macedonian sway. Had they been instrumental in freeing their country from the foreign yoke, they and not Chandragupta and his band of mercenaries would have been mentioned by Justin as the great liberators. Moreover, if the destruction or expulsion of Greek commanders had already been effected by Āmbhi or the Paurava, then whence had come the prefects against whom Chandragupta went to war and fought so vigorously, as narrated by Justin? It is true that Chandragupta is not mentioned in connection with the partition treaties of Babylon and Triparadeisos. But we have a similar reticence in regard to Eudemos, the Yavana commandant in the Western Punjab who stuck to his post up to about 317 B.C.

The presence of this officer and that of his Indian colleagues does not preclude the possibility of the assumption of sovereignty by Chandragupta in the lower Indus valley or the plains and uplands of the Indian interior some time before 321 B.C.

Tradition avers that in overthrowing the iniquitous rule of the last Nanda, Chandragupta was greatly helped by the Brāhmaṇa Kauṭilya or Chānakya who became his chief minister. A direct attack on the heart of the Nanda empire is said to have failed. Next time the young Maurya is said to have commenced from the frontiers and met with success. The Nanda troops, led by the general Bhadrasāla, were defeated with great slaughter, and Chandragupta seized the sovereignty of Pāṭalinutra.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DISRUPTION OF THE MAGADHAN EMPIRE AND INCURSIONS FROM CENTRAL ASIA AND IRĀN

Successors of the Imperial Mauryas

WITH the fall of the Mauryas, Indian history for the time being loses its unity. The command of one single political authority is no longer obeyed over a large part of India. Hordes of foreign barbarians pour through the north-western gates of the country and establish powerful kingdoms in Gandhāra (North-West Frontier), Śākala (North-Central Punjab) and other places. The southern provinces throw off the yoke of Magadha and rival in power and splendour the remnant of the great empire of the Gangetic plain. A new dynasty supplants the Mauryas in the *Madhya-deśa*, or the Upper Ganges valley, and finds it no easy task to maintain its position against the rush of invasion from the south and the north-west.

In Magadha and the neighbouring provinces the immediate successors of the Mauryas, according to the Purāṇas, were the Śuṅgas who are usually regarded as a Brāhmaṇa family belonging to the *Bhāradvāja* clan. The founder, Pushyamitra, is known from literature and also from an epigraph, discovered at Ayodhyā. In one famous work, the family to which he belonged is styled *Baimbika* and not Śuṅga. He was the general of the last of the Imperial Mauryas, whom he overthrew in the very sight of the army. The people seem to have acquiesced in the change of dynasty as the later Mauryas had proved tyrannical and incapable of stemming the tide of Greek invasion and maintaining the prestige of the arms of Magadha.

The dominions of the new king at first extended as far south as the Narmadā (Narbadā or Nerbudda). The north-western boundary seems to have been ill-defined, but tradition credits the house of Pushyamitra with having exercised control as far as Jālandhar and Śiālkoṭ in the Punjab. Pāṭaliputra continued to be graced with the presence of the sovereign, but it had a rival in the city of Vidiśā, modern Besnagar in Eastern Mālwa, where the crown prince Agnimitra held his court.

The prince was soon involved in a war with the neighbouring kingdom of Vidarbha or Berar. He succeeded in defeating his adversary and reducing him to obedience. A more serious danger threatened from the north-west. The Greeks had renewed their incursions towards the close of the third century B.C. and a Greek king, Antiochos the Great of Syria, had penetrated into the Kābul valley and induced the Indian king Subhāgasena to surrender a number of elephants. His example was soon followed by his son-in-law Demetrios, prince of Bactria, who effected extensive conquests in the Punjab and the lower Indus valley. Equally brilliant achievements are attributed to a later king, Menander. The war-like activities of the Greeks are alluded to by Patañjali, Kālidāsa and the author of the *Gārgī Samhitā*. We are told that the "viciously valiant barbarians" besieged Sāketa in Oudh and Madhyamikā near Chitor and threatened Pāṭaliputra itself. The tide of invasion was arrested and prince Vasumitra, son of Agnimitra, inflicted a defeat on the *Yavanas* on the banks of the Sindhu, either the Indus or some stream in Central India. The grandfather of the victorious prince signalled the triumph of his arms by the successful performance of two horse-sacrifices. These rites had a double significance. On the one hand they proclaimed the rise of a new empire on the ashes of Mauryan hegemony, which was successful in defending *Āryāvarta* against the barbarian outcastes of the frontiers. On the other hand they heralded the dawn of a new Brāhmaṇical movement which reached its climax in the spacious days of the Guptas.

Pushyamitra died after a reign of thirty-six years, according to the Purāṇas (c. 187–151 B.C. according to the system of chronology adopted in these pages). He was succeeded by his son Agnimitra. This prince is the hero of a famous drama by India's greatest playwright, Kālidāsa. After him the history of the dynasty became obscure. Vidiśā, modern Besnagar in Eastern Mālwa, continued to be a great political centre, and its princes had diplomatic relations with the Greek potentates of the borderland. But the power of the family gradually weakened, and in the end the ruler of the line became a puppet in the hands of his Brāhmaṇa minister, like the Childerics and Chilperics of Western Europe in the hands of their Carolingian Mayors of the Palace. Eventually the ministerial family, known as Kāṇva, assumed the purple under Vasudeva (c. 75 B.C.), but permitted the *fainéant* kings of the Śuṅga dynasty to continue to rule in obscurity in a corner of their former dominions. In or about 40–30 B.C. both the Śuṅgas and the Kāṇvas were swept away by a southern power, and the

province of Eastern Mālwa where stood the metropolis of Vidiśā was eventually absorbed within the dominions of the conqueror. Princes with names ending in Mitra, and possibly connected with the Śuṅgas and Kāṇvas, seem to have exercised sway in Magadha and the Ganges-Jumnā valley till the Scythian conquest.

The Sātavāhanas

The southern potentate who put an end to the rule of the Śuṅgas and the Kāṇvas is described in the *Purāṇas* as an Andhra, a name applied to the people of the Telugu-speaking tract at the mouth of the Godāvarī and the Kṛishṇā. In contemporary epigraphic records, however, kings of this line are invariably referred to as Sātavāhana and a "district of the Sātavāhanas" has been proved to lie in the neighbourhood of Bellary in the Kanarese area of the Madras Presidency. The memory of the dynasty lingers in the story of the king Śālivāhana famous in Indian folk-lore. This legendary hero seems to have appropriated to himself the glorious deeds of several distinguished members of a long line of emperors of the Deccan.

The founder of the family was Simuka, but the man who raised it to eminence was his son or nephew Śātakarṇi I. The latter allied himself with the powerful Mahārāṭhī chieftains of the western Deccan, and signalised his accession to power by the performance of the horse-sacrifice. Some time after his death, the Sātavāhana power seems to have been submerged beneath a wave of Scythian invasion. But the fortunes of the dynasty were restored by Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi, who took pride in calling himself the destroyer of the Sakas (Scythians), Yavanas (Greeks) and Pahlavas (Parthians). Gautamīputra built up an empire that extended from Mālwa in the north to the Kanarese country in the south. His son, Vāsishtīputra Pulumāyī, ruled at Pratishthāna or Paithan on the banks of the Godāvarī, now situated in the Aurangabad district of the Nizam's dominions. Two other cities, Vijayantī (in North Kanara) and Amarāvati (in the Guntur district), attained eminence in the Sātavāhana period. A king named Vāsishtīputra Śātakarṇi, who may have been a brother of Pulumāyī, married the daughter of the contemporary Śaka satrap (viceroy) Rudradāman I, but this did not prevent the latter from inflicting crushing defeats on his southern relation. The power of the Sātavāhanas revived under Sri Yajña Śātakarṇi, but he was the last great prince of the line, and after him the empire began to fall to pieces like the Bahmanī kingdom of a later age. According to some *Purāṇas* 19 kings of this

dynasty ruled for 300 years, while according to others, 30 kings ruled for 456 years. The dynasty came to an end about the middle of the third century A.D.

The most important among the succeeding powers in the Deccan were the Ābhīras and the Vākātakas of Nāsik and Berar in Upper Mahārāshtra, the Ikshvākus and the Śālaṅkāyanas of the Kṛishṇā and West Godāvarī districts, the Pallavas of Kāñchī (near Madras) and the Kadambas of Vaijayantī or Banavāsi in North Kanara.

Khāravela of Kalinga

The earlier Sātavāhana empire had a formidable rival in the kingdom of Kalinga, which had thrown off the yoke of Magadha some time after the death of Aśoka and risen to greatness under Khāravela, a prince of remarkable vigour and ambition. Khāravela defied or rescued Śātakarṇi, probably the first of that name, and humbled the pride of Magadha, then under a prince who has been identified with Brīhaspatimitra. Brīhaspati is, in the opinion of some scholars, the same as Pushyamitra, but the theory lacks plausibility. The Kalinga king is also credited with having pushed his southern conquests beyond the Godāvarī. His career was meteoric, and after his death his empire vanished as quickly as it had risen.

The Tamil Country

The far south of India beyond the Veṅkaṭa Hills, known as the Tamil or Draviḍa country, was parcelled out among many States of which three were important, namely, Chola, Pāṇḍya and Kerala. The Cholas occupied the present Tanjore and Trichinopoly districts with some adjoining areas, and showed great military activity in the second century B.C. A Chola prince, Elara, conquered Ceylon, and many anecdotes have been preserved which testify to his strong sense of justice. The Pāṇḍyas excelled in trade and learning. They occupied the districts of Madurā and Tinnevely with portions of South Travancore. A Pāṇḍya king sent an embassy to the Roman emperor, Augustus, in the first century B.C. To the north and west of the Pāṇḍyas lay the Kerala country embracing Mālabār, Cochin and North Travancore.

Renewed Incursions of the Greeks

The political disintegration of India after the Great Mauryas invited invasions from without, and we have already referred to

renewed warlike activities on the part of the Greeks of Syria and Bactria. The Syrian empire, once so powerful under Seleukos, was now seriously weakened by the secession of Parthia and Bactria which were torn from the Seleukidan dominions by satraps who revolted and asserted their independence. And it was from these rebellious provinces that fresh invaders swooped down upon the smiling plains of the Punjab.

At first Bactria showed the greatest activity. Demetrios, son of Euthydemos, king of Bactria, reduced to submission a considerable portion of Afghānistān, the Punjab and Sind, and founded or embellished cities in the conquered territories which bore his own name and possibly that of his father. But a rival appeared in Eukratides, who made himself master of the Indian borderland, leaving to his antagonist the precarious tenure of some provinces in the interior. A later king, Menander, who apparently belonged



COIN OF DEMETRIOS

to the house of Demetrios, reigned gloriously at Śākala (Euthymedia or Euthydemia), identified with modern Śiālkoṭ in the Punjab. His dominions may have included the Bajaur territory in the North-West where an inscription dated in the fifth year of his reign has been discovered. He is credited with having pushed his arms beyond the river Beas. Another king, Antialkidas, ruled at Taxila (near Rāwalpindi) in Gandhāra and sent an embassy to the court of Vidiśā. Some of these later Greek princes and members of their court succumbed to the influence of their environment and became adherents of Buddhism or of Vaishṇavism. Greek political power in parts of Afghānistān and the Indus valley was soon threatened by the Parthians led by Mithradates I, a contemporary of Eukratides who ruled in the second century B.C. In the first century A.D. all vestige of Greek rule seems to have disappeared from the Punjab as well as the borderland. The last known Greek king was Hermaios, who soon made way for the

founders of the Parthian and Kushān monarchies to the south of the Hindukush.

The Sakas and Parthians

The foreign conquerors who supplanted the Greeks in north-west India belong to three main groups, namely, Śaka, Pahlava or Parthian, and Yue-chi or Kushān. The Śakas were displaced from their home in Central Asia by the Yue-chi and were forced to migrate south. We are told by Chinese annalists that the Śaka king went south and ruled in Ki-pin, which about this time probably corresponded to the territory drained by some of the northern tributaries of the Kābul river. They are found settled in southern Afghānistān in the time of Isidore of Charax, probably about the beginning of the Christian era, and the territory they occupied came to be known as Śakasthāna, modern Sistān. Gradually they extended their sway to the Indus valley and Western India, which came to be styled Scythia by Greek mariners and geographers in the first and second centuries A.D. In the first century after Christ part of this territory had already fallen into the hands of the Parthians. Inscriptions and coins disclose the names of many Scytho-Parthian kings and provincial governors. One of the earliest among these rulers was Maues, Moa or Moga, who was acknowledged as their suzerain by the governors of Chuksha near Taxila. Maues seems to have been followed by Azes I, Azilises and Azes II, after whom the sovereignty of the Indian borderland passed into the hands of Gondophernes, a Parthian. Some scholars attribute to Azes I the foundation of that reckoning commencing 58 B.C. which afterwards came to be known as the *Vikrama Samvat*, but the matter cannot be regarded as certain. Indian tradition ascribes to it an indigenous origin. It was handed down by the Mālava tribe, and in the post-Gupta period came to be associated with the great Vikramāditya, the destroyer of the Śakas.

With one of the kings named Azes was associated a ruler named Spalirises who seems to have reigned in Southern Afghānistān and to have been a successor of King Vonones. The identity of this Vonones with any king of the imperial line of Arsakes must remain a baffling problem. The Śaka-Pahlava kings ruled over an empire that embraced several provinces. The governors of these administrative units were known as satraps (*Kshatrapa*) or great satraps (*Mahākshatrapa*). One of these satrapal families ruled in Kāpiśa near the junction of the Ghorband and Panjshir rivers in Afghānistān,

another near Taxila in the Western Punjab, a third at Mathurā in the Jumnā valley, a fourth in the upper Deccan and a fifth at Ujjain in Mālwa. The satraps of the upper Deccan and part of Western India belonged to the Kshaharāta race, probably a branch of the Śakas. They carved out a principality on the ruins of the early Sātavāhana empire and attained great power under Nahapāna. But they were finally overthrown by Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi who restored the fallen fortunes of the Sātavāhana family. The satraps of Ujjain traced their descent from the lord (*svāmin*) Chashtana, the Tiashtanes of Ptolemy the geographer. Rudradāman, grandson of Chashtana, ruled from about A.D. 130 to 150, and was one of the greatest Śaka rulers of ancient India. He entered into a matrimonial alliance with the Sātavāhana dynasty, but this did not prevent him from inflicting defeats on his southern neighbour. If his court poet is to be believed his sway extended from the Konkan in the south to Sind and Mārwar in the north. The successors of Rudradāman were not so strong as he was. Internal feuds were common. Power gradually fell into the hands of the Ābhira chieftains. The death-knell of satrapal rule in Mālwa and Kāthiāwār was sounded when a new indigenous empire rose in the Ganges valley in the fourth century A.D. and the arms of Samudra Gupta and Chandra Gupta II swept through the tableland of Mālwa and involved Śaka and Ābhira in common ruin.

Fall of the Parthians and the Kushān Conquest

Long before the final catastrophe that ultimately overtook the satrapal line of Chashtana, the Śaka-Pahlava emperors of the north-west had passed through vicissitudes of another kind. Gondophernes, who had probably succeeded Azes II on the imperial throne of the north-west, had a chequered career. Numismatic evidence points to the wide extent of his sway and his leaning towards Indian culture. Tradition associates his name with that of the Christian apostle St. Thomas. He does not seem to have left to his successors a stable government. We are told by a contemporary Greek mariner that Parthian princes in the latter half of the first century A.D. were constantly driving each other out. The Yue-chi nomads of Central Asia, who had been driven from their ancestral abode on the Chinese frontier about 165 B.C. and had settled in the Oxus valley, were not slow to take advantage of Parthian disunion. The five principalities into which the Yue-chi were divided in their new home were consolidated into a powerful monarchy by Kieu-taiou-k'io, identified with Kujula Kasa, Kadphises or

Kadphises I, head of the Kushān (*Kuṣāna*) section of the horde. Kadphises attacked the Parthians, took possession of Ki-pin and Kābul and became complete master of the Indian borderland. Copper coins of Kujula bearing a remarkable resemblance to Roman *denarii*, particularly to the Constantia type of the emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54), prove that he ruled not earlier than the middle of the first century A.D. A *terminus ad quem* is probably fixed by the Chinese reference to the Yue-chi occupation of Kābul or some territory in its neighbourhood before A.D. 92.

The successor of Kieu-tsieu-k'io or Kujula Kadphises was Yen-kao-chen or Vima Kadphises (II) of the coins. The new king is credited by Chinese annalists with the conquest of the Indian interior, where he set up a governor to rule in his name. He became a convert to Śaivism and proclaimed himself as *Mahisvara* on his coins. The



KANISHKA

*From a coin in the
British Museum*

wealth and prosperity of his dominions are illustrated by the fine gold coins that were issued under his orders. Ambassadors from India presented their credentials to the Roman emperor Trajan (A.D. 98–117). They may have arrived from the Kushān court, but it is uncertain whether they were sent by Kadphises II or a later king, Kanishka.

Kanishka I

Kanishka is usually regarded as a successor of Vima Kadphises (Kadphises II). To him is attributed by many scholars the foundation of the Śaka era of A.D. 78. This era is the only Indian reckoning traditionally ascribed to a Śaka potentate, and Kanishka is the only Scythian king known to have established an era, that is to say, his regnal reckoning was continued by his successors for several generations, and was thus transformed into an era. Kanishka was no doubt a Kushān and not strictly speaking a Śaka, but

the latter designation was used in India in a wide sense to include all kindred tribes. Chinese historians refer to a famous conflict between a Kushān king and the great general Pan-chao in the last quarter of the first century A.D. The view held by certain scholars is that the Kushān antagonist of Pan-chao was Kadphises II. No such event is, however, associated with Yen-kao-chen or Kadphises II by Chinese annalists. On the other hand Kanishka, whose name was not known to the official historians of China, certainly came into conflict with that country, and Hiuen Tsang speaks of one or more Chinese hostages detained at his court. If Kanishka was the contemporary of Pan-chao the ascription to him of the Śaka era cannot be regarded as untenable. But it is not possible to come to a definite conclusion on the origin of the era of A.D. 78.

According to Hiuen Tsang the great empire over which Kanishka exercised his sway had its capital at Purushapura or Peshāwār. Epigraphic evidence points to the inclusion within his dominions of the wide expanse of territory from Gandhāra and Sue Vihar to Oudh and Benares. The inclusion of Kāshmir is testified to by Kalhana, and clashes with the rulers of Sāketa and Pāṭaliputra are vouched for by other writers. As already stated, the pilgrim Hiuen Tsang refers to a war with China in the course of which the Kushān king obtained some initial successes in eastern Turkestan. But he was unable to make much impression on his mighty northern neighbour. The north alone, according to tradition, remained unsubdued.

But it is not as a conqueror that Kanishka is chiefly remembered by posterity. His chief title to fame rests on his monuments and on the patronage he extended to the religion of Śākya-muni. The celebrated *chaitya* that he constructed at Peshāwār excited the wonder and admiration of travellers down to a late period, and the famous sculptures executed under his orders include a life-size statue of the king himself. In Buddhist ecclesiastical history his name is honoured as that of the prince who summoned a great council to examine the Buddhist scriptures and prepare commentaries on them. Inscriptions and coins bear eloquent testimony to the king's zeal for the religion of the Buddha. That his association with it dated from the beginning of his reign is possibly proved by the Peshāwār Casket Inscriptions. Among the celebrities who graced his court the most eminent was perhaps Aśvaghoṣa, philosopher, poet, and dramatist, who wrote the *Buddha Charita* and other books.

Successors of Kanishka I

Kanishka's rule lasted for twenty-three years. His immediate successor was Vāsishka, who had a short reign and was succeeded by Huvishka. The empire of Huvishka was not less extensive than that of the traditional patron of Aśvaghosha. It may have spread farther to the west, as a record of his reign has been unearthed at Wardak to the west of Kābul. Mathurā was now a great centre of Kushān power and it was adorned with monuments by Huvishka as the city of Peshāwār had been embellished by Kanishka. For some time Huvishka had apparently a colleague or rival in Kanishka of the Ārā inscription, who is described as a son of Vājshesha, possibly the same as Vāsishka, and receives in addition to the titles of great king, the king of kings, son of heaven (*devaputra*) assumed by his predecessors, the novel title of Kaisara, "Caesar". In Kalhana's Chronicle we have a reference to the rule of "Hushka, Jushka and Kanishka", apparently identical with Huvishka, Vājshesha and his son. They were the reputed founders of three cities in Kāshmīr named after them. Kanishka of this passage may have reference to the predecessor of Vāsishka, but it is more probable that the king referred to by Kalhana is identical with his namesake mentioned in the Ārā inscription.

The last great Kushān king was Vāsudeva I, who ruled from about the year 67 to 98 of the Kanishka era. Most of his inscriptions have been found at or near Mathurā, and his coins usually bear the god Śiva and rarely any Iranian deity. It is not improbable that he gradually lost touch with the north-western provinces. The decline of the Kushān power in the north-west was hastened by the rise of the Sassanian dynasty of Persia. In the third century A.D. we find references to four separate kingdoms all dependent on the Yue-chi. This possibly suggests territorial disintegration though the nominal suzerainty of the "Son of Heaven" may have continued to be acknowledged by all these states. The rule of the Kushāns in part of the Jumnā valley seems to have been supplanted by that of the Nāgas. The latter are represented as ruling over Mathurā, Padmāvati (Padam Pawayā) and a few other places in Mid-India contemporaneously with the Guptas of Prayāga (Allahābād), Sāketa (Oudh) and Magadha (South Bihār). About the middle of the fourth century A.D. the Nāgas were reduced to subjection by the Gupta emperors. The "Son of Heaven" continued to rule in diminished glory over an obscure corner of the Indian borderland where he soon felt the irresistible might of Gupta arms.

CHAPTER IX

CIVILISATION IN THE ERA OF MAURYAN IMPERIALISM AND OF GRAECO-SCYTHIAN INVASIONS (c. 324 B.C.—A.D. 320)

Forms of Government

IN the period under review we have for the first time in the history of this country great empires extending from the Hindukush to the valleys of the Godāvari and the Kṛishṇā. It will, however, be a mistake to think that the imperial or even the ordinary monarchical system was the only form of government known to the people of the age. Greek observers referring to the activities of the overseers who “enquire into and superintend all that goes on in India” add that “they make report to the king or, where the state is without a king, to the magistrates”. Thus non-monarchical states governed by their own magistrates flourished side by side with territories ruled by kings. Arrian makes distinct mention of self-governed cities. Towards the end of our period the existence of autonomous tribal governments is proved by numismatic evidence. Such states are usually referred to as *gaṇas*, although the designation *saṅgha* is also known.

But monarchy was in this, as in all ages, in this country, the prevailing form of government. A remarkable feature of the period is the association in many parts of India of a prince of the blood or an allied chieftain with the titular or real head of the government as co-ordinate ruler or subordinate colleague. Such a prince was often called *yuvarāja* or *yuva-mahārāja* (crown prince or junior king). Sometimes he was honoured with full regal titles. In the literature on polity this type of rule was known as *dvairājya* or diarchy.

Ideas of Kingship

Ideas of kingship underwent a change during the period. At the commencement of the age a king was considered to be a mere mortal, though a favoured mortal, the beloved of the deities. Thus Aśoka referred to himself and his forebears as *devānampiya*, the beloved of the gods. The Greeks, however, introduced titles like the “divine king”, the “god-like queen”, etc. In the early centuries

of the Christian era a Parthian king took the title of *Devavrata*, an epithet applied to an epic hero, the son of a river goddess, and also to Kārttikeya, the god of war. The Kushān emperors adopted the still more significant title of *devaputra*, "Son of Heaven". The deification of rulers was clearly on the way to accomplishment, and ideas of divine kingship found favour especially in tracts which came under foreign influence. Greek and Chinese influence is clearly discernible in the title of *devaputra*.

Kings, even those who preceded the Scythian "Sons of Heaven", were no puppets. They had usually at their disposal powerful standing armies and the material resources of vast kingdoms and empires over which they presided. From the observations of Greek writers and the actual records of the reigns of Chandragupta, Aśoka, Khāravēla, Gautamīputra and many other rulers, it is clear that kings often led the troops in person to the battlefield. They also administered justice, issued rescripts, made important appointments, granted remission of taxes and took a large share in the ordinary work of civil government. They generally held in their hands the main strings of policy. Rulers with such powers and resources cannot be regarded as limited monarchs of the type with which the modern world is familiar. Nevertheless it is a mistake to consider Hindu kings of the age as absolute despots. There was a body of ancient rules which even the most masterful of the rulers of the period viewed with respect. The people were an important element (*prakṛiti*) of the state. They were looked upon as children (*prajā*) for whose welfare the head of the state was responsible, and to whom he owed a debt which could only be discharged by good government. There was a certain amount of decentralisation notably in the spheres of local government, legislation and administration of justice in the rural areas. The existence of autonomous communities, urban and rural, political and economic, social and religious, put a limit, in normal times, on the exercise of authority by the supreme executive. Lastly, there was usually at imperial head-quarters, and also at the chief centres of provincial government, a body of ministers (*mantri parishad*, *mati sachiva*) who had a right to be consulted especially at times of emergency.

Literature on Polity

For a detailed record of the administrative arrangements of the period we have to look mainly to three classes of evidence, namely, inscriptions, accounts of Greek and Roman observers, notably Megasthenes, and literature on polity styled *Rājāsāstra* or *Ārthasāstra*.

Treatises on polity are often found embedded in legal or Purāṇic collections. But a few exist as independent works. The most famous among these is the *Arthaśāstra* attributed to Kauṭilya, the traditional minister of Chandragupta Maurya. The *Arthaśāstra* certainly existed before Bāṇa (seventh century A.D.) and the *Nandi Sūtra* of the Jainas (not later than the fifth century A.D.). But it is doubtful if in its present shape it is as old as the time of the first Maurya. Reference to *Chinapaṭṭa*, China silk, a commodity often mentioned in classical Sanskrit literature, points to a later date, as China was clearly outside the horizon of the early Mauryas, and is unknown to Indian epigraphy before the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions. Equally noteworthy is the use of Sanskrit as the official language, a feature not characteristic of the Maurya period. A date as late as the Gupta period is, however, precluded by the absence of any reference to the *denarius* in the sections dealing with weights and coins. Quite in keeping with this view is the reference to the *Arthaśāstra* contained in the Jaina canonical works that were reduced to writing in the Gupta age.

Maurya Administration

The administrative history of the epoch is best studied under two heads, namely, Maurya administration and the system prevailing in the days of their Indian and Graeco-Scythian successors.

As already stated, the Maurya king did not lay claim to divine rank. Aśoka looked upon his people as his children and assigned their care to his officers just as a mother does to skilful nurses. The idea of government paternalism persists in these expressions. In one record he declared that whatever effort he was making was intended to discharge the debt which he owed to living beings. The *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra*, which in its present shape may be post-Mauryan but which uses older material, declares that "whatever pleases himself the king shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good." The king is also advised to show fatherly kindness to his people.

The powers of the king were extensive. We have it on the authority of Megasthenes that the king took part in war and the administration of justice. While listening to causes he did not suffer himself to be interrupted even though the time arrived for the massage of his limbs. Appointments to the most important offices were made by the ruler himself; he also often laid down the broad lines of policy and issued rescripts and codes of regulations (*śāsana*, *dharmaṇiyama*) for the guidance of his officers and the people.

Control was maintained over the most distant officials by an army of secret reporters and itinerant judges, and communication with them was kept up by a network of roads marked with pillars at every ten *stadia*.

It was impossible for a single individual to support the Atlantean load of administration. The king had the assistance of a council of advisers styled the *Parishad* or the *mantri parishad*, who were specially consulted in times of emergency. There were also bodies (*nikāya*) of trained officials who looked after the ordinary affairs of the realm. Greek writers refer to three important classes of officers, styled district officials (*Agronomoi*), city commissioners (*Astynomoi*) and a third body who had the care of military affairs. In the inscriptions of Aśoka we have references to *Rajukas* and *Prādesikas*, charged with the welfare of *Jānapadas* or country parts and *Pradeśas* or districts, *Mahāmātras* or high officers charged with the administrations of cities (*Nagala Viyohālaka*) and sundry other matters, and a host of minor officials including clerks (*Yuta*), scribes (*Lipikara*) and reporters (*Paṭivedaka*). The *Arthasāstra* mentions the official designations *Mahāmātra*, *Yukta*, etc. It refers to the highest officers as the eighteen *tīrthas*, the chief amongst whom were the *Mantrin* (chief minister), *Purohita* (high priest), *Yuvarāja* (heir-apparent) and *Senāpati* (commander-in-chief). Another important class of officials mentioned in the literature on polity are the *Adhyakshas* or superintendents in charge of the various departments of the state. Officials were appointed irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. *Vaiśyas* and even *Yavanas* were admitted to the highest offices of the state.

At the head of the judiciary stood the king himself. But there were special tribunals of justice, both in cities and the country parts, presided over by *Mahāmātras* and *Rajukas*. Greek writers refer to judges who listened to the cases of foreigners. Petty cases in villages were doubtless decided by the headman and the village elders. Aśoka seems to have introduced many reforms in judicial administration and procedure. While preserving a certain amount of uniformity he is said to have allowed considerable discretion to the *Rajukas* so that they could discharge their duties unperturbed. Greek writers testify to the severity of the penal code, and the emperor admits in some of his inscriptions that in Kalinga individuals suffered from arbitrary imprisonment and torture. To check maladministration in this and other outlying areas the emperor or his viceroys sent forth in rotation every five or three years such officers as were of mild and temperate disposition and regardful of the sanctity of life.

The army was often led by the king himself. Chandragupta personally undertook the campaign against the generals of Alexander, and Aśoka was an eye-witness of the terrible carnage in Kalinga. It is only in the days of the last Maurya that we find a *senāpati* overshadowing the king and transferring to himself the allegiance of the troops. The army of Chandragupta, according to Pliny, included 600,000 foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalry, and 9,000 elephants, besides chariots. The protection of the king's person was entrusted to an amazonian bodyguard of armed women. The fighting forces were under the supervision of a governing body of thirty divided into six boards of five members each. Each of these boards was responsible for one of the following departments, namely, the navy, transport and commissariat, the infantry, the cavalry, the chariots and the elephants. In military as well as judicial affairs Aśoka must have introduced great innovations. He deprecated wars and abolished even hunting. In one of his inscriptions he declares exultingly that throughout his dominions the sound of the war-drum had become the sound of *dharma* (religious discourse). It would have been a miracle if the army could have preserved its morale and efficiency under such circumstances.

The cost of civil and military administration even at the centre must have been enormous. The chief sources of revenue from villages mentioned in an inscription of Aśoka are the *bhāga* and the *bali*. The *bhāga* was the king's share of the produce of the soil, which was normally fixed at one-sixth, though in special cases it was raised to one-fourth or reduced to one-eighth. *Bali* is explained by commentators as an extra impost levied on special tracts for the subsistence of certain officials. According to Greek writers, husbandmen paid, in addition to a fourth part of the produce of the soil, a land tribute because "all India is the property of the Crown and no private person is permitted to own land". Originally *bali* may have had reference to this land tribute. Taxes on land were collected by the *Agronomoi* who measured the land and superintended the irrigation works. Other state-dues included cattle from herdsmen and tribute and prescribed services from those engaged in the trades. In urban areas the main sources of revenue were birth and death taxes, fines and tithes on sales. The distinction between taxes levied in rural and fortified areas (*rāshtra* and *durga*) is indicated in the *Arthasāstra*, which refers to certain high revenue functionaries styled the *samāhartṛi* and the *sannidhātṛi*. No such officials are, however, mentioned in the known Maurya inscriptions. Greek writers on the other hand, in describing the

seventh caste of Indian society which consisted of the king's councillors and assessors refer distinctly to treasurers of the state or superintendents of the treasury.

A considerable part of the revenue was spent on the army. The artisans, too, according to Diodoros, received maintenance from the imperial exchequer. They made armour for the troops, and constructed implements for husbandmen and others. The services of some of them must have been requisitioned for the construction of the wooden ramparts and towers encircling the city of Pāṭaliputra, and the splendid palaces which excelled in magnificence the stately regal edifices of Susa and Ecbatana. To them we owe also the splendid monoliths and other monuments of the time of Aśoka.

Herdsmen and hunters received an allowance of grain from the state in return for clearing the land of wild beasts and fowls. Another class which benefited from the royal bounty were the philosophers, among whom were included *Brāhmaṇas* as well as *Śramaṇas* (ascetics). Vast sums were also spent for irrigation and other works of public utility. The most famous of the irrigation works of the early Maurya period is the Sudarśana lake of Kāṭhiāwār, constructed by Pushyagupta the Vaiśya, an officer of the founder of the dynasty, and provided with supplemental channels by the *Yavanarāja* Tushāspa in the days of the emperor Aśoka. Roads furnished with milestones had already been constructed by the officials of the first Maurya. These were provided with shady groves and wells by his famous grandson. The latter also built hospitals both for men and other living creatures.

For the efficient administration of their huge empire the Mauryas divided their dominions into provinces subdivided into districts called *āhāra*, *viśaya* and perhaps also *pradeśa*. Each of the provinces was placed under a viceroy or governor who was either a prince of the blood or an official of the crown. In one case, and perhaps in several others, the local ruler or administrator bore the title of *rājā*, which is normally indicative of feudatory rank. The system of hereditary officials does not seem to have come into use in the early period, at least in the province of Surāshṭra or Kāṭhiāwār. The assumption of the title of *rājā* by local rulers, and the grant of autonomy to the *Rajukas* in the days of Aśoka, ultimately let loose centrifugal forces which must have helped in the dismemberment of the empire. In the early Maurya period, however, efficient control over the provincial governors was maintained in various ways. With the princely viceroys were associated a number of high officers (*mahāmātras*) who received

orders from the sovereign. The work of erring *mahāmātras* in certain areas was supervised by special officers sent periodically from the metropolis. There was, besides, a host of secret emissaries of the central government (ephors, episkopoi, *paṭivedakas*) who enquired into and superintended all that went on in India and made reports to the emperor. Aśoka gave special directions to the reporters that they were to report to him the affairs of the people at any time anywhere "while he was eating, in the harem, in the inner apartment, at the cow-pen, in the palanquin or in the park".

It may be thought that the all-embracing activities of the Maurya imperial government left little room for popular initiative or self-government. Nevertheless it is a fact that autonomous communities did exist in Maurya India, and classical writers make distinct mention of self-governed cities. Important affairs of the metropolis itself were conducted by a commission of thirty members divided, like the governing body of the defence forces, into six boards of five members each. There was a small committee to look after each of the following departments, namely, the mechanical arts, foreign residents, registration of births and deaths, sales, exchanges, weights and measures, supervision of manufactured articles, and collection of tithes on sales. Officers in charge of the city (*nagarādhyaksha*, *nigamapradhāna*) find mention in Indian literature. The *Kauṭīliya Arthasāstra* says in the chapter dealing with the examination of government servants that each department shall be officered by several heads (*bahumukhya*), and that the *adhyaksha*, or chief executive officer of a department, shall carry on his work in company with four other officials. The *Nagaraka* or the Town Prefect, whose duties are described in a subsequent chapter, was a distinct official whose existence in the Maurya period is proved by the testimony of the Kalinga edicts of Aśoka.

Administration in the Post-Maurya Period

In the post-Maurya period ideas of kingship changed, but a ruler still considered it to be his duty to please his people. The official machinery of the Aśokan age continued to function at least in those parts of India which did not come under Greek and Scythian domination. The science of government (*arthavidyā*) was now regularly studied and its influence is seen in epigraphic references to the education of princes, insistence on prescribed qualifications for appointment to high offices, classification of ministers, measures taken to secure the welfare of citizens both in urban and rural areas, and abstention from oppressive imposition

of vexatious taxes like *Kara* (extra cess), *Viśhṭi* (forced labour) and *Pranaya* (benevolence) in addition to the customary *Bali* (tribute), *Sulka* (duty), and *Bhāga* (king's share of the produce).

Innovations in administration were, however, introduced in north-west India, the territory that was ruled by successive dynasties of foreign conquerors. One of the most important changes related to the system of provincial government. The system of government by hereditary officials with the Persian title of Satrap was introduced in Taxila, Mathurā, Ujjain and a few other places, and we have references even to functionaries with the Greek titles of *meridarch* and *strategos*. A body of counsellors (*mati sachiva*) seems to have been associated with some of the provincial rulers, but the rule of others was often of a purely military character. The influence of the system of military governors (*strategos*) is clearly seen in the appointment by Sātavāhana kings of district officers styled *mahāsenāpati*.

In spite of the prevalence of military rule in certain areas the old self-governing institutions did not wholly perish. Town councils (*nigama sabhā*) and officials styled *nagarākshadarsa* (city judges) are mentioned in several records and these correspond to the municipal commission and the *nagala viyohālaka* of the Maurya period. The affairs of the village continued to be controlled by the village functionaries led by the head-man. The village assembly afforded a field for co-operation between kings and villagers.

Social Conditions

Varṇa (caste) and *āśrama* (periods or stages of religious discipline), the two characteristic institutions of the Hindu social polity, reached a definite stage in the Maurya period. Greek writers inform us that no one was allowed to marry out of his own caste or to exercise any calling or art except his own. For instance, a soldier could not become a husbandman or an artisan a philosopher. It is, however, added by some that the sophists could be from any caste. Philosophers lived in simple style and devoted their lives to serious study and discourses. Some of them became wood-dwellers (*hylobioi*) who subsisted on leaves and fruits and wore garments made from the bark of trees. These undoubtedly correspond to the *vānaprastha* order of Hindu anchorites. In the inscriptions of Aśoka we have mention of householders and wandering ascetics. The system of the four *āśramas* was thus well established in the early Maurya age.

The rise of heterodox creeds, the influx of foreigners and many

other causes must have affected to a certain extent the rigidity of caste rules. Instances of matrimonial alliances between Indian monarchs and foreign potentates are known, and a Sātavāhana record makes pointed reference to the mingling of the four castes which a king took considerable pains to prevent. The same king is eulogised as a promoter of the households of Brāhmaṇas and the lowly orders, doubtless the *Vaiśyas* and the *Śūdras*. The *Kautilīya Arthasāstra* mentions agriculture, cattle breeding and trade as the common occupation of *Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras*, and, if Greek writers are to be believed, the old distinction between the *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra* was gradually obliterated and replaced by a new distinction between husbandmen, herdsmen, and traders, who constituted distinct castes. The physicians too emerge as a distinct group of philosophers next in point of honour to the wood-dwellers. Another remarkable feature of the period is the growth of two official castes, namely, the overseers and the councillors. The latter doubtless correspond to the *amātya* (or *amacca*) *kula* of the Pāli texts. The philosophers, the husbandmen, the herdsmen and hunters, the traders and artisans, the soldiers, the overseers and the councillors constituted the seven castes into which the population of India was divided in the days of Megasthenes. There is no reason to doubt that the Greek writer described the actual conditions as witnessed by him as opposed to the theory of the law-books. The restoration of the fourfold division of caste (*chāturvarṇa*) was sought by the great Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi, who referred to *dvijas* (Brāhmaṇas) and *avaras* (the lower orders) as objects of his special care and to the Kshatriyas as a conceited class whom he did much to repress. The cause of Gautamīputra's hostility to the warrior caste is not clear. It is possible that the ranks of the latter were being swelled by *Yavanas*, *Śakas*, and *Pahlavas* who are classed by the author of the *Mānava-dharmaśāstra* (Institutes of Manu) as degraded Kshatriyas. It is well known that the wrath of the great Sātavāhana was specially directed against the latter. Caste rules could not, however, be rigidly enforced. The Sātavāhanas themselves intermarried with Śakas, and Brāhmaṇas figure as generals and kings like Droṇa of old.

Regarding the position of women, Greek writers and contemporary epigraphs give us a few details. We are told that some of them pursued philosophy and lived a life of continence. But married women were denied the privilege of sharing with their husbands a knowledge of the sacred lore. Polygamy was practised, especially by rulers and noblemen. The care of the king's person was entrusted to women, and we have the curious story that a woman who

killed a king when drunk was rewarded by becoming the wife of his successor. Aśoka refers to women as particularly given to the performance of many trivial and worthless ceremonies. The practice of seclusion of women is hinted at by expressions like *Olodhana* occurring in inscriptions. Superintendents to look after women are mentioned. That the wife took a prominent share in religious activities by the side of her husband is clear from the record of the benefactions of Kāruvāki, the second queen of Aśoka himself. A glimpse of the way in which the life of a pious widow was spent is afforded by a Nāsik record which refers to the queen-dowager Gautamī Balaśrī as one who delighted in truth, charity, patience, and respect for life; who was bent on penance, self-control, restraint and abstinence, fully working out the type of a royal sage's wife (*rājarishibadhu*). Her son is eulogised for unquestioning obedience towards his mother. "Women though deserving of honour should not have independence" says the law-giver. But history records instances of royal ladies who guided the affairs of a realm on behalf of their children.

Slavery was an established institution. It is recognised not only by the law-books and the literature on polity, but is expressly referred to in inscriptions. Aśoka draws a distinction between the slave and the hired labourer and inculcates kind treatment for all. Arrian, however, probably relying on Megasthenes, states that "all the Indians are free and not one of them is a slave". Strabo also quotes Megasthenes as saying that none of the Indians employed slaves. But the same writer in describing the customs of the court of Pātaliputra observes that the care of the king's person is entrusted to women who are bought from their parents. Buying and selling of women are thus admitted. We have it on the authority of Hegesander and Athenaios that Amitrochates, that is Bindusāra, wrote to Antiochos asking him to purchase and send him not only sweet wine and dried figs but a sophist, only to be reminded that it was not lawful in Greece to sell a sophist. The implication is that a different law prevailed in the realm of Bindusāra. It has been pointed out by some scholars that Megasthenes may have been misled by the statement of Onesikritos about the non-existence of slavery in the lower Indus valley, or he may have heard of the principle laid down in Indian works on polity that no Aryan should be kept in the condition of permanent slavery.

About the manners and customs of the Indians we are told by Greek and Latin writers that they lived frugally and observed good order. Cultivators were mild and gentle. Theft was a thing

of very rare occurrence and no Indian was accused of lying. The people never drank wine except at sacrifices and their food was principally a rice pottage. Their laws were simple. They had no suits about pledges or deposits nor did they require seals or witnesses, but they made their deposits and confided in each other. Their houses and property were generally left unguarded. We are further told that the Indians were a simple folk ignorant of writing and conducted all matters by memory. That the picture is a little overdrawn seems clear from what the same writers say about the different sections of the people in other passages. Thus Strabo tells us that fighting men when not engaged in active service passed their time in idleness and drinking. Speaking about a great synod that used to be held by philosophers, the same writer informs us that some of them commit their suggestions to writing. In another passage he quotes Nearchos as saying that Indians wrote letters on pieces of closely woven linen, while Curtius informs us that the bark of trees was used for writing on.

Games and Recreations

Inscriptions of the period refer frequently to *utsava* and *samāja*, festivities and merry gatherings. Kings considered it a duty to give practical demonstration of their sympathy with the people by liberality on such occasions. Dancing, singing and instrumental music must have formed an important part of all festivities. *Samājas* were often held in honour of a deity, e.g., Brahmā, Paśupati-Śiva, or Sarasvatī. A prominent feature of some of these assemblies was a joust of arms in which wrestlers from distant regions took part. Fights between men and between elephants and other animals are mentioned by Aelian, who also describes chariot races with teams of oxen and horses as practised in the imperial city of Pāṭaliputra. The combats of men and animals often led to shedding of blood, and this was perhaps the reason why Aśoka issued an edict forbidding certain types of *samāja* "in which he saw much offence", while admitting that there were other festal meetings which were excellent in his sight. Patañjali makes mention of dramatic representations by the *Śaubhikas* or *Śobhanikas*, who gave before the eyes of the spectators an actual demonstration of the incidents mentioned in the plays. He also refers to *Granthikas* who related the fortunes of their subjects from birth to death. Dice play afforded pleasure to many though its baneful effects are frequently alluded to. Buddhist writers refer to games on boards with eight or ten rows of squares from which chess play

ultimately evolved. The Jaina *Sūtrakṛitāṅga* makes explicit mention of chess (*ashtapada*), a game that must have become very popular by the time of Bāṇa's *Harsha-charita* and Ratnākara's *Haravijaya* (ninth century A.D.).

Condition of the Peasantry

The common people, as distinguished from the intellectual and official aristocracy, seem to have been divided into three main classes, namely, husbandmen, herdsmen and hunters, and traders and artisans. Husbandmen formed the most numerous class of the population. Their lot in the early Maurya period does not appear to have been hard. We are told by Greek observers that they were exempted from fighting and other public services, and devoted the whole of their time to tillage. Men of this class were regarded as public benefactors and were not molested in times of war and conflict. The land remaining unravaged produced heavy crops and supplied the inhabitants with all that was requisite to make life very enjoyable. Husbandmen lived in the country away from towns. They paid into the treasury a share of the produce of the soil besides a land tribute which may be identical with the *bali* of the epigraphs. In times of emergency they had to pay benevolences. But such imposts were levied on rare occasions and a Śaka ruler specially notes the fact that he carried out certain works without resorting to forced labour, extra cess or benevolences. In parts of India the lot of the rural population was probably a little harder. Some idea of the burden borne by the ordinary villagers in these tracts may be gathered from the immunities (*parihāra*) that were granted, according to certain records of the Sātavāhanas and their successors, to *Vāṭakas* and *Kshetras*, that is, gardens and fields, conferred on privileged individuals or communities by royal personages. Such plots were "not to be entered by royal officers, not to be touched by any of them, not to be dug for salt, not to be interfered with by the district police". A fuller list of various kinds of immunity is given in a Pallava record which says that a garden which belongs to the Brāhmaṇas is to be "free from *Kara* (extra cess), free from the taking of sweet and sour milk, free from troubles about salt and sugar, free from forced labour, free from the taking of the oxen in succession, free from the taking of grass and wood, free from the taking of vegetables and flowers".

The rural areas were exposed to danger from flood, fire and locusts. Philosophers are represented by classical writers as gathering together at the beginning of the year to forewarn the

assembled multitude about droughts and wet weather and also about propitious winds and about diseases. Storehouses were set up to provide for emergencies due to pests. The state was enjoined by the *Arthaśāstra* writers to show favour in times of distress by distributing seeds and food. We have it on the testimony of Greek writers that the sovereign always made adequate provision against a coming deficiency, and never failed to prepare beforehand what would help in time of need. The duty of clearing the country of all sorts of wild beasts and birds which devoured the seeds sown by husbandmen devolved on herdsmen and hunters who lived in tents or on the hills. By hunting and trapping they freed the country from pests. Implements for agriculturists were made by the artisans, who were not only exempted from taxation but received maintenance from the royal exchequer. In return for these concessions they had to render to the state certain prescribed services.

Trade and Navigation

Kings as well as independent cities depended to a large extent on the tribute paid by the peasantry, but a considerable portion of the state revenues came from traders. In records of the period *śulka* is mentioned as an important source of royal income along with *bali* and *bhāga*. Maurya India had direct relations with Syria, Egypt and other countries of the Hellenistic West. There was a considerable body of foreign residents in the metropolis whose affairs were looked after by a special board of municipal commissioners. These foreigners could not all have been diplomatists. Some of them were in all probability traders. As early as the first century B.C. contact was established between India and the Roman empire. In the early centuries of the Christian era we have epigraphic as well as literary references to intercourse with China, the Hellenic world, Ceylon and Farther India. These are recorded in the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions and the *Milindapañho*.

Classical writers bear testimony to the activity and daring of the Indian navigators. One writer narrates how, in the reign of Euergetes II (145-116 B.C.), an Indian was brought to the king by the coast guard of the Arabian Gulf. They reported that they had found him in a ship alone and half dead. He spoke a language which they could not understand. He was taught the Greek tongue and then he related how he had started from the coast of India but lost his course and reached Egypt alone. All his companions had perished from hunger. If he were restored to his country he would point out to those sent with him the route by

sea to India. Eudoxus of Cyzicus was one of the number thus sent. He brought back with him aromatics and precious stones. Another writer relates that a present was given by the king of the Suevi to a pro-consul in Gaul, consisting of some Indians who, sailing from India for the purpose of commerce, had been driven by storms into Germany.

Sweet wine and dried figs of the West were eagerly sought by a Maurya king in the third century B.C. In the first century A.D. presents for the king of Broach, which was one of the greatest marts in the east, included costly vessels of silver, singing boys, beautiful maidens for the harem, fine wines, thin clothing and the choicest ointments. The Westerners on their part imported articles of luxury including the fine muslin of the lower Gangetic region. Pliny bears testimony to the vast sums of money sent to India in payment for these commodities. As early as the fourth century B.C. the municipal authorities of Pāṭaliputra had to constitute a special board to superintend trade and commerce. Its members had charge of weights and measures and saw that products in their seasons were sold with an official stamp. In the first century A.D. trade between India and the West was greatly facilitated when the pilot Hippalus discovered how to lay his course straight across the ocean. The splendid river system of northern India rendered transport comparatively easy in this area. The Maurya government built ships and let them out on hire for the transport of merchandise. Communication was more difficult in the Deccan, where vast tracts were without roads and goods had to be carried with difficulty by wagons from Paithan and Tagara to the port of Broach.

Medium of Exchange

Foreign commerce brought a large quantity of specie to India, and we have already referred to Pliny's complaint about the drainage of Roman coins to this country. In the opinion of scholars the institution of a gold coinage by the Kushān imperial government from the time of Kadphises II is due to the influx of gold from the Roman empire. The Indians had an indigenous silver and copper coinage even in the pre-Maurya period. The gold *nishka*, though often used as a medium of exchange, probably did not in the early period possess all the characteristics of a regular coinage. The silver coin of thirty-two *ratis* (58.56 grs.) was known to the writer of the *Mānava-dharmaśāstra* (Institutes of Manu) as *Purāṇa* or *Dharaṇa*. The copper coin of eighty *ratis*

(146.4 grs.) was known as *Kārshāpaṇa*. Smaller copper coins styled *Kākaṇi* were also in circulation. The name *Kārshāpaṇa* was also applied to silver and gold coins particularly in the south. Buddhist commentators distinguished between the old (porāṇa) *ṛiḷa kaḥāpaṇa* (*Kārshāpaṇa*), apparently a silver coin, and the new type of coinage introduced by the satrap Rudradāman which was three-fourths of the old *Kārshāpaṇa* in weight. An old *Kārshāpaṇa* was equivalent to twenty *māshas* in certain areas and sixteen *māshas* in others. The actual weight of the extant silver coins of the western satraps is from thirty-four to thirty-six grains. The rate of exchange between the *Kārshāpaṇa* of thirty-six grains and the gold coins of the period, the *Suvarṇa* of one hundred and twenty-four grains, was as 1 to 35. The ratio of silver to gold at this time was approximately 1 to 10.

Industry

The importance of the manufacturing industry in the Maurya period is emphasised by the fact that one committee of the municipal board of Pāṭaliputra was specially entrusted with the supervision of manufactured articles in the metropolis. Greek writers make pointed reference to the manufacture of arms and agricultural implements and the building of ships mainly for purposes of river navigation. Strabo speaks of dresses worked in gold and adorned with precious stones and also flowered robes made of fine muslin worn by the wealthy classes, and umbrellas used by their attendants. Indian muslin was exported in large quantities to the Roman empire in the first century A.D. Muslins of the finest sort were then called Gangetic and were produced in the valley of the lower Ganges. The fame of Eastern Bengal and the Gangetic delta for its white and soft *dūkūla* is also vouched for by the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra*. The fabric produced in Northern Bengal was black and as smooth as the surface of a gem. Muslins in great quantity were also exported from several market towns of southern India. The North-West was famous for its cotton cloth and silk yarn. The weaving industry gave employment to hundreds of helpless women and special arrangements were made for those who did not stir out of their houses. Weavers and other handicraftsmen were often organised into economic corporations called *Śreṇis*. *Śreṇis* or guilds were very much in evidence during this period. Records of the Sātavāhana age refer to guilds of weavers, braziers, oil-millers, bamboo-workers, corn-dealers, and of artisans fabricating hydraulic engines. These guilds often served the purpose of modern banks.

Religion

For a description of the state of religion in the days of the Imperial Mauryas and their successors we have to rely on Greek and Latin authors, inscriptions and coins, the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali and the testimony of later writers. The worship of the Vedic gods was still far from obsolescent. Zeus Ombrios, the rain-god, worshipped by the Indians, probably represents the Vedic Indra or Parjanya. Indra and Varuṇa are invoked as late as the Sātavāhana period. But side by side with them appear other deities whose popularity dates from the epic period. The river Ganges, for example, is mentioned as an object of worship by classical writers. Quintus Curtius states that an image of Herakles was carried in front of the army of Poros as he advanced against the Macedonian conqueror. The connection of the Indian Herakles with the Śūrasenas and the city of Mathurā suggests his identification with Vāsudeva or Saṅkarshaṇa. Patañjali refers to the exhibition and sale by the Mauryas of images of Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha. Skanda and Viśākha retained their popularity till the Kushāna period when they appeared on the coins of Huvishka. Even Aśoka, in many respects a great innovator, took pride in calling himself *devānampiya*, Beloved of the Gods.

Sacrifices are very much in evidence during this age. Of the occasions on which the Maurya king, according to Strabo, went out in times of peace, one was for the performance of sacrifice. Sacrifices were also offered by private persons and the services of "philosophers" were requisitioned for the purpose. The people of India, generally sober, freely indulged in drink when these ceremonies were performed. Aśoka tried to put a stop to the killing of living creatures on such occasions. Vaishṇava reformers made an attempt to spiritualise sacrifices by giving them a new ethical meaning. But a great Brāhmaṇic revival followed the rise of the houses of Pushyamitra, Simuka-Sātavāhana and Śiva-skandavarman Pallava. Rites like the *Aśvamedha* and *Vājapeya* came to be celebrated by princes on a grand scale.

From the beginning of the period Brāhmaṇism had to reckon with the heterodox creeds of the Ājīvikas, Jainas and Buddhists which obtained a firm hold on certain sections of the people, especially in Oudh, Bihār and Orissa. Tradition says that Chandragupta and Samprati of the Maurya dynasty were Jainas. The epithet *Vṛishala*, applied to the first Maurya by a Brāhmaṇical playwright, makes it likely that in his later days he swerved from strict orthodoxy. An undoubted Jaina king of this period

was Khāravela, who, strange to say, engaged in sanguinary conflicts with his neighbours in spite of the quietist teachings of the Arhats and Siddhas, saints and perfect beings, whom he invokes at the beginning of his inscription. Jainism enjoyed special pre-eminence at Mathurā during the early centuries of the Christian era along with the cult of the Nāgas or Serpent deities like Dadhikarṇa. The rival sect of the Ājīvikas enjoyed, like many other denominations, the bounty of the emperors Aśoka and Daśaratha who granted cave dwellings for these sectaries. If tradition is to be believed the Ājīvikas were also favoured by Bindusāra.

Buddhism, as is well known, secured the imperial patronage of Aśoka and became, mainly through his efforts, a world religion. It received marked favour from Menander and made a convert of the great Kanishka. But the Buddhism of Kanishka differed much from the simple ethical creed of the great Maurya. The human teacher of the four noble truths and the noble eight-fold path now became not merely a *deva* (deity) but *devātideva* (the god of gods). Like the Blessed Lord of the Bhāgavatas or Vaiṣṇavas he is repeatedly born in the world of the living to remove the affliction of creatures and reveal to them the true law. Images of the teacher now appear in Buddhist sculpture and receive the devout worship of the faithful, like the icons of Brāhmaṇic deities. Side by side with the Buddha appear the *dhyāni* Buddhas and Bodhisatvas. The newer Buddhism was known as the *Mahāyāna* or the Great Vehicle to distinguish it from the older creed which came to be styled *Hīnayāna*. The formulation of its basic ideas is associated with the name of Nāgārjuna, a philosopher of the Sātavāhana period. In the early centuries of the Christian era Buddhism spread to China and several other parts of central, eastern and southern Asia. The Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions make mention of the fraternities of monks who converted Kāśmīr, Gandhāra, China, Chilāta, Tosali, Aparānta, Vaṅga, Vanavāsi, Yavana, Damila, Palura and the island of Ceylon. The introduction of Buddhism into China is traditionally attributed to a sage named Kaśyapa Mātāṅga. There is, however, evidence to show that Buddhist scriptures were communicated to the Chinese by a Yue-chi Chief as early as 2 B.C.

Another Indian faith which showed great missionary activity was Bhāgavatism or Vaiṣṇavism, which already in the second century B.C. spread amongst the Greeks of the Indian borderland. Heliodoros, the ambassador of Antialkidas, king of Taxila, set up a Garuḍa column at Besnagar in honour of Vāsudeva, the God of gods. Several contemporary epigraphs bear testimony to

the prevalence, especially in Central India and the Deccan, of the cult of Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇa, that is Kṛiṣṇa and his brother. The rival cult of Śiva enjoyed the patronage of Kadphises II and Vāsudeva Kuṣhān. A foreign religion, Christianity, claims to have established some connection with the Indian borderland in the days of Gondophernes. The worship of Babylonian, Iranian and other non-Indian deities like Nanaia, Mithra or Mihira (Sun), Mao (Moon), and Pharro (Fire) in the Kuṣhān empire is proved by numismatic evidence. The cult of Mihira attained much popularity, thanks to the endeavours of the Magian priesthood.

Literary Activity

It is difficult to assign any extant Indian work definitely to the Maurya age. Three works, the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra*, the *Kalpasūtra* of Bhadrabāhu and the Buddhist *Kathā vatthu*, are traditionally attributed to personages who are said to have flourished in the Maurya period, but the ascription in all these cases has not met with general acceptance. A considerable body of literature is presupposed by Patañjali, usually regarded as a contemporary of Pushyamitra. Though many of the compositions mentioned by him existed long before the Mauryas, some of them may have been products of the Maurya epoch. The Grammarian knows the Pāṇḍu epic and refers to dramatic recitals and the performance of *Kaṁsabadha* (slaying of Kaṁsa by Kṛiṣṇa) and *Balibandha* (binding of Bali by Viṣṇu in his Dwarf Incarnation). He also alludes to *ākhyānas* or tales of Yavakṛita, Yayāti, Vāsavadattā and others, and makes mention of a *Vānarucha Kāvya*. That parts of the *Mahābhārata* were composed during the Maurya or early post-Maurya period appears probable from references to the unconquerable Aśoka and also to a Yavana overlord of the lower Indus valley and his compatriot Dattāmitra, possibly Demetrios. The reference in the sister epic to mingled hordes of Yavanas and Śakas suggests that the *Rāmāyaṇa*, too, received accretions in the Graeco-Scythian age. The *Mānavadharmasāstra* which mentions the Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas, and Pahlavas among Kṣatriya clans which were degraded for non-observance of sacred rites and neglect of Brāhmaṇas may also be assigned to this period.

The epoch under review probably saw the composition of the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, an exposition of the grammatical aphorisms of Pāṇini. Another grammatical work, the *Kātantra* or *Kalāpaka* of Śarvavarman, is traditionally assigned to the Sātavāhana period. To the same age probably belongs the *Bṛihat kathā*

of Guṇāḍhya. The *Gāthā Saptasati* attributed to Hāla, a Śātavāhana king, bears signs of a much later date. The epoch of the Kushāns produced the great work of Aśvaghoṣa, poet, dramatist and philosopher. Among other celebrities of the period mention may be made of Charaka, Suśruta, Nāgārjuna, Kumāralāta and possibly Āryadeva.

The Pāli Buddhist canon is said to have been reduced to writing in the first century B.C. The celebrated work known as the *Milinda-pañho*, or the Questions of Menander, is also usually regarded as a product of the period under review. Some scholars believe that the astronomical work of Garga, the *Paumachariya* of Vimalasūri, portions of the *Divyāvadāna* as well as the *Lalitavistara* and the *Saddharma puṇḍarīka* are also to be assigned to this age.

Greek and Roman Influence

For centuries during the period under review India was in intimate contact with the Graeco-Roman world. Embassies were exchanged with the Hellenic powers by the sovereigns of Magadha and Mālwa. Indian philosophers, traders and adventurers were to be found in the intellectual circles of Athens and in the markets of Alexandria. The first of the Mauryas is said to have entered into a marriage contract with a Greek potentate. His son was eager to secure the services of a Greek sophist. The third and the greatest of the Mauryas entrusted the government of a wealthy province and the execution of important irrigation works to a Yavana chief. The services of Greek engineers seem to have been requisitioned by the greatest of the Kushāns in the early centuries of the Christian era. Greek influence on Indian coinage and iconography is unmistakable.

A Greek orator, Dion Chrysostom, informs us that the poetry of Homer was sung by the Indians, who had translated it into their own language and modes of expression so that even Indians were not unacquainted with the woes of Priam, the weeping and wailing of Andromache and Hecuba and the heroic feats of Achilles and Hector. The reference may be to the *Mahābhārata*, but the possibility of an actual translation of the Greek epic is not entirely excluded. Indian writers bear testimony to the proficiency of the Greeks in the sciences, and one author admits that they were honoured as though they were *Rishis* (Sages). Western singers were welcomed at the court of Broach. On the other hand Greek authors speak with admiration of the sages of India. Hellenic rulers and statesmen listened with respectful attention to Indian philosophers.

One of the greatest of the Indo-Greek kings, Menander, showed great predilection for Buddhist teaching and issued coins of Buddhist type. A Greek ambassador erected a Garuḍa column in honour of Vāsudeva. Greek *meridarchs* are mentioned in Kharoshthī inscriptions as establishing Buddhist relics and sanctuaries. Indian cultural influence on the Greeks of Egypt has been traced in the Oxyrhynchus papyri.

CHAPTER X

THE GUPTA EMPIRE

The Rise of the Gupta Power

THE Scythian conquerors of India had received their first great check in the Deccan. Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi of the Śātavāhana dynasty had extirpated the Kshaharāta race and dealt crushing blows to the Śakas, Yavanas, and Pahlavas. The power of the invaders was, however, still unshaken in the north where the "Son of Heaven" ruled in undiminished glory in the first part of the second century A.D. Even in Western India there was a Śaka revival under the great satrap Rudradāman I. Chinese evidence shows that the Yue-chi power was still far from being broken in A.D. 230. The rise of the Nāgas in the Jumnā valley pushed the Northern Scythians further towards the north-west borderland of India, but the descendants of Rudradāman continued to rule over the fair provinces of Mālwa and Kāthiāwār. The later Scythian rulers proved to be tyrants. A Brāhmaṇa historian of the seventh century A.D. refers to one of them as *Parakalatrakāmuka*, "coveting the wife of another". An epic poet makes the prophecy that Śakas and other *Mlechchha* (barbarian) kings will rule unrighteously in the evil age to come. The members of the four orders will not adhere to their duties and the country will become a desert. Harassed by barbarians the earth in an earlier epoch had taken refuge in the strong arms of Chandragupta Maurya. She now found shelter in another line of Chandraguptas.

Chandra Gupta I

The first Chandra Gupta of the new line, though the third member of his dynasty to be mentioned in inscriptions, was the earliest to assume the imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja*, "supreme King of great Kings". Like the great Bimbisāra he strengthened his position by a matrimonial alliance with the powerful family of Lichchhavis then controlling portions of Bihār and perhaps even Nepāl. The Lichchhavi princess Kumāradevī must have

brought to her husband's family an enormous accession of power and prestige. Before the death of her husband the Gupta sway very probably extended to Allahābād; Oudh and South Bihār, territories assigned to the family by the Purāṇic chronicles at a time when the Nāga power was still unbroken in the Ganges-Jumnā valley. It is believed that the Gupta era commencing from A.D. 320 originated with Chandra Gupta I. An important act of this king was the holding of an assembly of councillors and members of the royal family at which Prince Samudra Gupta was formally nominated successor to the imperial throne of the Guptas.

Samudra Gupta

Samudra Gupta, the next king, is probably the greatest of his house. The exact limits of his reign are not known. He probably



SAMUDRA GUPTA

came to the throne sometime after A.D. 320 and died before A.D. 380, the earliest known date of his successor. He is not altogether unknown to tradition. He appears to be mentioned in the *Ārya-maṇju-śrī-mūla kalpa*, and also in the *Tantrikāmandaka*, a Javanese text. A Chinese writer, Wang-hiuen-tse, refers to an embassy sent to him by Śrī Meghavarmā (-Vanna), king of Ceylon, to seek permission to build at Bodh-Gayā a monastery for Ceylonese pilgrims. But the most detailed and authentic record of his reign is preserved in a contemporary document, viz. the Allahābād Pillar Inscription, a eulogy of the emperor composed by Harishena.

There is also another contemporary epigraph found at Eran in Madhya Pradesh. Certain copper plates purporting to belong to his reign are regarded by scholars as spurious. Samudra Gupta also left an extensive coinage. Some important events of his reign are known from this source and the records of his successors.

The eulogy of Harishena is damaged in several parts so that it is difficult to follow the sequence of events. The Gupta monarch seems at first to have made an onslaught on the neighbouring realms of Ahichhatra (Rohilkhand) and Padmavati (in Central India) then ruled by Achyuta and Nāgasena. He captured a prince of the Kota family and then rested on his laurels for a period in the city named Pushpa, i.e. Pāṭaliputra. Whether the Kota dynasty actually ruled in Pushpapura or Pāṭaliputra about this time, and were dispossessed of it by the Gupta conqueror, is not made clear in the damaged epigraph that has come down to us. Other indications point to Śrāvastī or a territory still farther to the north as the realm where the *Kota-kula* ruled. A subsequent passage of the inscription names along with Achyuta and Nāgasena several other princes of Āryāvarta or the upper Ganges valley and some adjoining tracts, who were violently exterminated. These include Rudradeva, Matila, Nāgadatta, Chandravarman, Ganapati Nāga, Nandin and Balavarman. The identity of most of the princes named in this list is still uncertain. Matila has been connected by some scholars with the Bulandshahr district in the centre of the Ganges-Jumnā Doāb, while Ganapati Nāga seems to be associated by numismatic evidence with Narwar and Besnagar in Central India. Chandravarman is a more elusive but interesting figure. Suggestions have been made that he is identical with a ruler of the same name, the son of Simhavarman, mentioned as the lord of Pushkarana in an inscription discovered at Śusunia in the Bankura district of Western Bengal. His name has also been traced in the famous Chandravarmankoṭ in the Kotwalipādā pargana of the Faridpur district of Eastern Bengal. Bolder theorists have identified his father Simhavarman with a prince of Mandasor, the father of Naravarman, and located Pushkarana at Pokarna in Mārwar. Some have gone so far as to suggest that the Chandravarman of Samudra Gupta's record is not only a ruler of Rājputāna and a brother of Naravarman of Mandasor, but he is no other than the great emperor Chandra of the Meherauli Iron Pillar near Delhi. The last-mentioned scholars were apparently not aware of the existence of a place called Pokharan in the district of Bankura itself near the site of the record of Chandravarman. They also forget that no prince bearing the name

Chandravarman, still less a Chandravarman of Pokarna in Mārṇār, is mentioned in any record of the Mandasor family, and that King Chandra of the Meherauli epigraph, who is called simply Chandra and not Chandravarman, is an emperor, the reputed conqueror of the whole of India, who can hardly be identified with the ruler of Samudra Gupta's record who is classed with a host of comparatively insignificant princes.

The great Gupta conqueror is next represented as reducing to the status of servants the forest kings apparently of the Vindhyan region. In an earlier passage we have reference to a grand expedition to the south in the course of which the emperor captured and again set at liberty all the kings of the Deccan. The rulers specially named in this connection are Mahendra of Kosala in the Upper Mahānadi valley, Vyāghra-rāja or the Tiger king of the great wilderness named Mahākāntāra, Maṇṭarāja of Kurala, Mahendragiri of Pishtapura or Pithapuram in the Godāvari district, Svāmidatta of Koṭṭura somewhere in the northern part of the Madras Presidency, Damana of Eraṇḍapalla possibly in the same region, Viṣṇugopa, the Pallava king of Kāñchi in the Chingleput district, Nilarāja of Avamukta, Hastivarman, the Śālaṅkāyana king of Veṅgi lying between the Godāvari and the Kṛishṇā, Ugrasena of Palakka, probably in the Nellore district, Kubera of Devarāshṭra in the Vizagapatam district and Dhanañjaya of Kusthalapur, possibly in North Arcot.

The reference to the liberation of the southern potentates shows that no attempt was made to incorporate the kingdoms of the Deccan south of the Nerbudda and the Mahānadi into the Gupta empire. From the territorial point of view the result of the brilliant campaigns of Samudra Gupta was the addition to the Gupta dominions described in the Purāṇas, of Rohilkhand, the Ganges-Jumnā Doāb, part of Eastern Mālwa, perhaps some adjoining tracts and several districts of Bengal. The annexation of part of Eastern Mālwa is confirmed by the Eran inscription. The suzerainty of the great Gupta, as distinguished from his direct rule, extended over a much wider area, and his imperious command was obeyed by princes and peoples far beyond the frontiers of the provinces directly administered by his own officers. Among his vassals we find mention of the kings of Samatata (in Eastern Bengal), Davāka (probably near Nowgong in Assam), Kāmarūpa (in Western Assam), Nepāl, Karṭripura (Garhwal and Jalandhar) and several tribal states of the eastern and central Punjab, Mālwa and Western India, notably the Mālavas, Yaudheyas, Madrakas, Ābhīras and Sanakānikas. The descendants of the Kushān "Son of Heaven",

many chieftains of the Śakas, the Ceylonese and several other insular peoples hastened to propitiate the great Gupta by the offer of homage and tribute or presents. It was presumably after his military triumphs that the emperor completed the famous rite of the horse-sacrifice.

Great as were the military laurels won by Samudra Gupta, his personal accomplishments were no less remarkable. His court poet extols his magnanimity towards the fallen, his polished intellect, his knowledge of the scriptures, his poetic skill and his proficiency in music. The last trait of the emperor's character is well illustrated by the lyrist type of his coins. He gathered round himself a galaxy of poets and scholars, not the least eminent among whom was the warrior-poet Harishena who resembled his master in his versatility. Both Samudra Gupta and Aśoka set before their minds the ideal of world-conquest by means of *parākrama*. *Parākrama*, in the case of the Maurya, was not warlike activity but vigorous and effective action to propagate the old Indian morality as well as the special teaching of the Buddha. In the case of the Gupta it was an intense military and intellectual activity intended to bring about the political unification of *Āryāvarta*, the discomfiture of the foreign tormentors of the holy land and an efflorescence of the old Indian culture in all its varied aspects—religious, poetic, artistic.

Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya

Samudra Gupta was succeeded, according to contemporary epigraphs, by his son Chandra Gupta II surnamed Vikramāditya who ruled from c. A.D. 380 to 413. Some writers have traced hints in literature of uncertain date and in inscriptions of the ninth and tenth centuries A.D., that the immediate successor of Samudra Gupta was his son Rāma Gupta, a weak ruler, who consented to surrender his wife Dhruvadevi to a Śaka tyrant. The honour of the queen was saved by Chandra Gupta, younger brother of Rāma Gupta, who killed the Śaka, replaced his brother on the imperial throne and married Dhruvadevi. We do not know how far the story embodies genuine historical tradition. No prince named Rāma Gupta is known to contemporary epigraphy, and the story shows signs of growth. The earliest version to which a definite date may be assigned is that of Bāṇa who simply refers to the destruction of a libidinous Śaka king by Chandra Gupta disguised as a female. There is no reference here either to Rāma Gupta or to Dhruvadevi. The matter should, therefore, be

regarded as *sub judice* and can only be decided when contemporary evidence confirming the story is forthcoming.

Chandra Gupta II carried on the policy of "world-conquest" pursued by his predecessor. He effected his purpose partly by pacific overtures and partly by military activity. Political marriages occupy a prominent place in the foreign policy of the Guptas as of the Hapsburgs and Bourbons of Europe. The Licchhavi alliance of the real founder of the dynasty, and the acceptance of presents of maidens from the courts of contemporary potentates by Samudra Gupta, served to consolidate the nascent Gupta power as the Rajput marriages strengthened that of the Timurid sovereigns of a later date. A further step in the same direction was taken by Chandra Gupta II when he conciliated the Nāga chieftains of the upper and central provinces by accepting the hand of the princess Kuberanāgā and allied himself with the powerful family of the Vākātakas of the Deccan by giving his daughter Prabhāvatī in marriage to Rudrasena II. Thus strengthened, the king marched to Eastern Mālwa accompanied by his minister Virasena-Śāba and possibly his general Āmrakārdḍava. He received the homage of the Sanakānika chieftain of the locality and took measures to wipe out Śaka rule in Western Mālwa and Kāthiāwār. His efforts were crowned with success as we know from the evidence of coins and of Bāṇa's *Harsha-charita*.

On many of his coins Chandra Gupta II receives the epithet Vikramāditya. In certain records of the twelfth century A.D. he is represented as the lord of the city of Ujjain as well as Pāṭaliputra. The cool courage he showed in going to fight with the Śakas and killing their chieftain in the enemy's own city entitles him to the epithets "*Sāhasīka*" and "*Śakāri*". These facts have led scholars to identify him with the Vikramāditya Śakāri of legend, whose court is said to have been adorned by "nine gems" including Kālidāsa and Varāhamihira. The tradition about the nine gems is, however, late. It is uncertain if all of them actually flourished about the same time. Varāhamihira at any rate is to be placed after Āryabhaṭa, who was born in the latter half of the fifth century A.D. But if Mallinātha is to be believed, Kālidāsa may have been a contemporary of Chandra Gupta II, for the great commentator mentions as one of his opponents the famous Dignāgāchārya who is assigned to this period.

Another notable contemporary of Chandra Gupta II was Fa Hien. The celebrated Chinese pilgrim was struck with admiration by the famous royal palace and the houses for dispensing charity

and medicine at Pātaliputra. He speaks highly of the system of government in the Madhya-deśa and the benevolence of the people, especially the moneyed classes.

Kumāra Gupta I and Skanda Gupta

The successor of Chandra Gupta II was his son Kumāra Gupta I Mahendrāditya, whose known dates range from A.D. 415 to 455. He maintained his hold over the vast empire of his forebears, which now extended from North Bengal to Kāthiāwār and from the Himālayas to the Nerbudda. Numismatic evidence seems to suggest that his influence at one time extended southwards, possibly as far as the Satara district of the Deccan. His achievements were sufficiently remarkable to entitle him to perform the famous rite of the horse-sacrifice. But his last days were not happy. A people known as the Pushyamitras, probably located in or near Mekala in the Nerbudda valley, developed great power and wealth and reduced the imperial government to such straits that a prince imperial had to spend a whole night on bare earth. The sovereign himself seems to have perished before the issues were finally decided in favour of the imperial family, mainly through the exertions of Prince Skanda Gupta.

The victorious prince had soon to deal with a more formidable enemy, the Huns. But he succeeded in repelling their early invasions and recovering most of the imperial provinces, which were placed under special Wardens of the Marches. In one inscription the goddess of royal fortune is said to have chosen him as her lord, having discarded the other princes. The full import of this passage is somewhat obscure. It is, however, certain that the superior ability and prowess of Skanda Gupta in a time of crisis led to his choice as ruler in preference to other possible claimants. The choice of Harsha in the seventh century apparently furnishes a parallel.

Proud of his success against the barbarians Skanda Gupta assumed the title of Vikramāditya. The memory of his achievements is popularly preserved in the story of Vikramāditya, son of Mahendrāditya, narrated in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. The reign of Skanda Gupta probably terminated about A.D. 467.

The Last Days of the Gupta Empire

The history of the ensuing period is obscure. Inscriptions prove that the Gupta sovereignty was acknowledged in the Jabbalpur

region in the Nerbudda valley as late as A.D. 528, and in North Bengal till A.D. 543-544. A Kumāra Gupta is known to have been ruling in A.D. 473-474, a Budha Gupta from A.D. 476-477 to c. A.D. 495, a Vainya Gupta in or about A.D. 508 and a Bhānu Gupta in A.D. 510-511. Bhitari and Nālandā seal inscriptions disclose the names of four kings, Puru Gupta, son of Kumāra Gupta I; Narasimha Gupta (Bālāditya), son of Puru Gupta; Kumāra Gupta, son of Narasimha, and Vishnu Gupta, son of Kumāra Gupta, who must be assigned to this obscure period. Narasimha Bālāditya has been identified with the conqueror of Mihiragula, a Hun tyrant, whose power was finally broken before A.D. 533-534. But the existence of several Bālādityas renders this identification doubtful. Another theory splits up the Gupta dynasty into two rival branches, one of which consisted of the kings mentioned in the Bhitari and Nālandā seals. The other included Kumāra Gupta of A.D. 473-474, Budha Gupta and Bhānu Gupta. But Budha Gupta is now known to have been a son of Puru Gupta, and the incontrovertible facts of his reign render the theory of a partition of the empire in the closing years of the fifth century A.D. unworthy of credence. A more plausible conjecture identifies Kumāra, son of Narasimha, with the Kumāra Gupta who ruled in A.D. 473-474. The only difficulty in accepting this view is the abnormal shortness of the period assignable to Puru Gupta and his son Narasimha (A.D. 467-473). But the difficulty is not insuperable, and we know of other instances of short reigns in the later days of an imperial dynasty.

Inscriptions make it clear that the Gupta empire maintained some sort of unity till the days of Budha Gupta (476-495) though it might have lost some of its westernmost provinces. After Budha Gupta the Huns, under Toramāna and Mihirakula or Mihiragula, undoubtedly pushed their conquests deep into the Indian interior as far as Eran in Eastern Mālwa. But the Huns received a check in the time of a king named Bālāditya who may have been identical with Bhānu Gupta, the hero of a "very famous battle" fought in the region of Eran. The Hun imperial power was finally shattered by Yaśodharman, an energetic and ambitious chief of Mandasor in Western Mālwa before A.D. 533-534. Yaśodharman seems to have made use of his victory to establish his own supremacy. But the Gupta power undoubtedly survived in North Bengal till A.D. 543-544. Even in later times we find a king whose name ended in Gupta fighting on the banks of the Brahmaputra. Other "Gupta" princes who are associated with Mālwa and Magadha came into contact with the rising power of the Pushyabhūti family of Thānesar and Kanauj in the latter half

of the sixth and first half of the seventh century A.D. These "Later Guptas" restored the glory of the line to a certain extent under Ādityasena in the latter half of the seventh century, and used titles indicative of imperial rank. They disappeared in the eighth century when Magadha became the battle-ground of the rival empires of Yaśovarman of Kanauj and an unnamed king of Gauda lineage. Whether the Later Guptas were connected in any way with the Imperial Guptas is not known.

CHAPTER XI

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE HUNS, AND THE ASCENDANCY OF KANAUJ, KĀSHMĪR AND GAUḌA

The Huns

IN spite of the heroic efforts of Skanda Gupta, the Gupta empire in its entirety did not long survive the shock it received from the uprising of the Pushyamitras and the incursions of the Huns. The hereditary character of the officialdom, particularly in some of the outlying provinces, must have let loose centrifugal forces which gathered strength as the central authority weakened owing to the onslaughts of the barbarians. There were signs of degeneration and of dissension in the imperial line itself, and the devotion of the more loyal feudatories could not save the empire from its impending doom. So far as our present knowledge goes Budha Gupta was the last emperor of the main line of the Guptas who preserved some semblance of unity in the major part of the empire. When he passed away the Huns were safely entrenched in the Śiālkoṭ region and Eastern Mālwa, provinces that had owned the Gupta suzerainty since the days of Samudra Gupta.

The Huns were a race of fierce barbarians who issued from the steppes of Central Asia and had in the fifth century A.D. spread in devastating hordes over some of the fairest provinces of the Roman empire in the West and the Gupta empire in India. Their early incursions into India were repulsed by Skanda Gupta, but they renewed their attacks when the great emperor was no more. Towards the close of the fifth and early in the sixth century A.D. the Hun suzerainty rapidly spread in all directions, thanks to the vigour and energy of Toramāna and his son Mihiragula. The last-mentioned ruler is known not only from inscriptions and coins, but from tradition recorded by Hiuen Tsang and Kalhaṇa, both of whom bear witness to his tyrannical rule. He has further been identified with the White Hun King Gollas mentioned by the monk Cosmas Indikopleustes, and also with the Yetha ruler of Gandhāra to whom Song Yün, the Chinese pilgrim, paid a visit in A.D. 520. An account of his feats is also supposed to be preserved in the Jaina stories about Kalkirāja. The expansion* of the Hun

rule in Central India seems to have been checked by the loyal feudatories of the Guptas, and their imperial power was finally shattered by Yaśodharman of Mandasor. Petty Hun chieftains continued to rule over a circumscribed area in North-West India and Mālwa, waging a perpetual warfare with the indigenous princes till they were absorbed into the Rājput population. It is significant that the new aspirants for imperial dominion in Āryāvarta, Yaśodharman, the Maukharis, the princes of the house of Pushyabhūti, and the Pālas set much store on success against these outlandish barbarians who harassed their country as the Yavanas and Śaka-Pahlavas did of old.

Yaśodharman

Yaśodharman probably belonged to an old family known as Aulikara whose members ruled in Malwa since the 4th century A.D., first as independent rulers and then as feudatories of the Guptas. He was a Śaiva ruler who has left records of his achievements at Mandasor. In these he claims to have granted protection to the earth when it was afflicted by the cruel and vicious kings of the age who transgressed the rules of good conduct. He is further described as a *Samrāj* or emperor who extended his sway over territories which even the all-conquering Gupta lords and Hun chieftains had failed to subdue. Homage was done to him by chiefs from the neighbourhood of the Brahmaputra up to the Eastern Ghāṭs and from the snowy heights of the Himālayas down to the Western Ocean. The Hun king Mihiragula, whose head had never previously been bowed in the humility of obeisance to any mortal, was compelled to do reverence to Yaśodharman's feet.

Portions of Mālwa were governed by the Maitrakas, Kalachuris and Guptas shortly after Yaśodharman. The imitation of Gupta coins and assumption of titles characteristic of kings of the Gupta family by the Kalachuris show that no wide interval separates their rule from that of the last of the Imperial Guptas of Mālwa.

The dominant powers in India in the latter half of the sixth century A.D. were the Maukharis in the Ganges valley and the Chalukyas of the Deccan. The history of the Chalukyas will be treated in a later chapter.

The Maukharis

The Maukharis claimed descent from Aśvapati of epic fame. They figured as feudatory chieftains or generals in Magadha and Rājputāna from very early times and possibly came into contact with

the Kadambas of South-West India. The family rose to prominence under Īśānavarman, who is the first to assume the imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja* or supreme king of great kings. From a record of his reign dated A.D. 554 we learn that he won victories over the Andhras, the Śūlikas and the Gaudas. The Andhras and the Śūlikas may have reference to the rulers of the Vishnukunḍin and Chalukya families of the Eastern and Western Deccan, while the Gaudas, whose "proper realm" lay not far from the sea, are apparently the people of Bengal. Īśānavarman also came into conflict with the later Gupta king, Kumāra Gupta, probably the third or fourth monarch of that name. The son of the latter is represented as "breaking up the proudly stepping array of mighty elephants, belonging to the Maukhari, which had thrown aloft in battle the troops of the Huns". It is clear that the Maukharis, like Skanda Gupta and Yaśodharman, carried on the struggle against the foreign invaders, the destruction of whose power was necessary to realise their dream of restoring the fallen fabric of imperialism in Northern India.

Īśānavarman was followed by at least three other princes, Śarvavarman, Avantivarman, and Grahavarman. The last-mentioned ruler was a son of Avantivarman. He married Rājyaśrī, daughter of Prabhākaravardhana of the Pushyabhūti family of Thānesar and sister to Rājyavardhana and his more celebrated brother Harsha. But the alliance could not save the Maukhari ruler from destruction at the hands of the "wicked lord of Mālava", who has been plausibly identified with Deva Gupta of the inscriptions of Harsha. Rājyaśrī, the widowed Maukhari queen, was cast into prison at Kanauj. The death of Grahavarman was avenged by his brother-in-law Rājyavardhana, the eldest son and successor of Prabhākaravardhana. But Rājyavardhana himself was killed by Śaśāṅka. It has been alleged by the court poet of Thaneswar that Rājyavardhana was "allured into confidence by false civilities on the part of (Śaśāṅka) the king of Gauda, and then weaponless, confiding and alone, despatched in his own quarters". The truth of this unconfirmed statement may be doubted.

Harsha

At this juncture the statesmen of Kanauj, on the advice of their leading noble Bani (Bhaṇḍi), seem to have offered the crown to Harsha, the brother of Rājyavardhana and of Rājyaśrī, who was destined to revive the imperial memories of the Gupta epoch and obtain recognition as the lord paramount of the whole of

Northern India, even from his bitterest enemies. The event happened in A.D. 606, the starting-point of the Harsha era. Both Bāṇa and Hiuen Tsang refer to Harsha's reluctance to mount the throne. This is taken by some to be due to the fact that he was not the rightful heir to the throne of Kanauj, which may have formed part of the dominions of his sister's Maukhari husband whose line was not yet extinct. But this view does not explain Harsha's hesitation to succeed his elder brother. The true history of the period will only be made clear when further evidence is forthcoming. It is, however, certain that Harsha found himself at the head of the kingdom of his brother as well as that of his brother-in-law. But he contented himself at first with the modest title of *Rājaputra* (Prince) Śīlāditya.

The dynasty to which Harsha belonged claimed descent from the illustrious Pushyabhūti, a devoted worshipper of Śiva. It ruled at Thānesar and was raised to greatness by Prabhākara-vardhana, father of Harsha, who was the son of a princess, possibly of "later Gupta" lineage. He took the title of *Mahārājādhirāja* and played the part of "a lion to the Hun deer". As already related he offered the hand of his daughter Rājyaśrī to Grahavarman Maukhari and thus formed an alliance between the two most powerful families of the Madhya-deśa (upper Ganges valley) which resembled the solar and lunar races of antiquity. The vicissitudes through which the kingdom of Thānesar passed in the time of Rājyavardhana, his immediate successor, have been mentioned above. Harsha on coming to the throne had to face a sea of troubles. He had to rescue his sister, the Maukhari queen Rājyaśrī, the widow of Grahavarman, who had fled from the place of her confinement at Kanauj. He had to avenge the death of his elder brother and predecessor, and he had to consolidate his authority in the two kingdoms over which he was called upon to rule. One of his earliest acts was a treaty of alliance with Bhāskaravarman, the ambitious king of Kāmarūpa in modern Assam, who was in a position to attack his arch-enemy, the king of Gauḍa, in the rear. Another prince befriended by Harsha was Mādhava Gupta, belonging to the line of the "later Guptas" of Mālwa and Magadha. The recovery of Rājyaśrī was effected within a short time by Harsha himself, who was accompanied by Mādhava Gupta, while Bhaṇḍ was ordered to proceed against the king of Gauḍa. Harsha is said to have waged incessant warfare until in six years he had fought the 'Five Indies'. Śaśāṅka of Gauḍa proved a formidable opponent and his power seems to have continued undiminished till A.D. 619. Harsha, however, succeeded in strengthening his position in the

home territories, and in 612 assumed full regal titles. He increased his army, bringing the elephant corps up to 60,000 and the cavalry to 100,000.

During the period 618–627 Chinese chroniclers record serious disturbances in India, and Śilāditya (Harsha) is represented as punishing the kings of the four parts of the country. What specific contests are meant is not made clear by the Chinese writers. But we learn from Chalukya records that sometime before 634 Harsha marched southwards as far as the Nerbudda, where his further progress was stopped by Pulakesin II of the Chalukya dynasty of Vātāpi in the Deccan. A record of the Gurjara chiefs of Broach refers to the defeat by Harsha of a prince of Valabhī who was granted protection by Dadda II. At the time of Hiuen Tsang's visit to Valabhī, c. 641, the reigning prince of Valabhī, Dhruvabhata, was attached to Harsha's interest by a matrimonial alliance. Śaśāṅka, king of Gauda, must have died sometime before 637 when Hiuen Tsang was at Nālandā in South Bihār. For a time Magadha passed under the rule of Pūrṇavarman. In 641 Śilāditya (Harsha) himself assumed the title of king of Magadha and exchanged embassies with China. According to tradition he had led an expedition to Northern Bengal. The final overthrow of the Gauda kingdom of Karpasuvārṇa seems to have been the work of his ally Bhāskaravarman whose Nidhanapur grant is issued from that city. The exact date of this event is not known. In 642 death probably removed Pulakesin II, the formidable southern rival of Harsha, and in the next year the northern emperor undertook an expedition to Gañjām. We have also references in literature to Harsha's expedition to the *Tushāra śaila* or snowy mountains, whence he exacted tribute, to Kāshmīr from which he carried off a tooth relic, and to Sind whose ruler was deprived of his royal fortune. We do not know to which period of Harsha's reign these events are to be assigned.

Much controversy has raged round the question of the extent of Harsha's empire. It certainly embraced the old kingdoms of Thānesar (in the eastern Punjab) and Kanauj (in the Gangetic Doāb) and the provinces of Ahichchhatrā (Rohilkhand), Śrāvastī (Oudh) and Prayāga (Allahābād). Chinese evidence points to the inclusion of Magadha since 641 and also of Orissa. Uditā of Jālandhar and Mādhava Gupta, apparently of Eastern Mālwa, seem so have been his vassals. The emperor's army had overrun almost the whole of Northern India, from the snowy mountains of the north to the Nerbudda in the south, and from Gañjām in the east to Valabhī in the west. The king of Kāmarūpa beyond the Brah-

maputra was his ally, and the real character of the alliance was well illustrated by an episode recorded by a Chinese writer which shows that the eastern potentate acknowledged the superiority of Harsha's might and did not dare disobey his orders. Even the most powerful of Harsha's enemies, viz. the Chalukyas of the Deccan, bear witness to his suzerainty over the whole of Uttarāṭ patha or Northern India. The pre-eminence of Harsha over other contemporary rulers of the North is also indicated by the "music-pace-drums" which he alone was entitled to use, other kings not being permitted to adopt the paraphernalia in question. It is not suggested that the whole of Northern India was actually controlled by imperial officials. Large tracts of this wide region were doubtless under powerful local rulers who owed only a nominal allegiance to the imperial throne. But even the rulers of distant Kāshmir, Sind, Valabhī, and Kāmarūpa had a wholesome dread of the power of Harsha. The king of Kāmarūpa dared not detain a Chinese pilgrim at his capital against the will of his mighty "ally", and the king of Kāshmir was compelled to surrender a tooth relic to Harsha. The ruler of Sind, already humbled by Prabhākaravardhana, was, according to Bāṇa, shorn of his royal fortune by Harsha. The ruler of Valabhī had once fled before the advancing arms of the Kanauj monarch, and later on accepted the hand of his daughter and attended the imperial court.

Kanauj, the imperial capital, had the Ganges on its west side. It is described by Hiuen Tsang as a very strongly defended city with lofty structures everywhere. There were beautiful gardens and tanks of clear water. Rarities from strange lands were collected here. The inhabitants were well off and there were families with great wealth. The people had a refined appearance and dressed in glossy silk attire. They were given to learning and the arts.

Harsha did not long survive the Gañjām campaign of A.D. 643. In his later days he received embassies from China and maintained close diplomatic relations with the Chinese court. At this period he came into contact with Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese Master of the Law, who was visiting the sacred spots of Buddhism. It appears from the records of the Chinese pilgrim that the emperor of Kanauj showed a strong predilection for Buddhism, though he does not seem to have discarded altogether the Śaivism of his earlier years. He caused the use of animal food to cease throughout his dominions and prohibited the taking of life. He erected rest-houses and monasteries and practised charity on an extensive scale.

In 643 the Chinese pilgrim witnessed two grand assemblies, one in the city of Kanauj, the other the quinquennial assembly known as

the *Mahāmokshapariśad*, in the “arena of charitable offerings” at Prayāga (Allahābād). The Kanauj assembly was summoned to honour Hiuen Tsang and the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism which he preached. It was attended by twenty kings, besides thousands of Buddhist, Brāhmaṇical and Jaina theologians and priests. Impressive spectacles were presented by a golden statue of the Buddha kept in a lofty tower and a gorgeous procession of elephants that escorted an image of the Śākya sage to the hall of assembly. The gathering at Prayāga included about 500,000 people who had been summoned from the distant corners of the “Five Indies” to receive gifts from the emperor. Harsha went to the spot accompanied by the Chinese Master of the Law and the kings of twenty countries. Images of the Buddha, Ādityadeva (the Sun), and Īśvaradeva (Śiva) were installed on successive days and precious articles were distributed in charity on each occasion. When the accumulation of five years was exhausted, the emperor wore a second-hand garment and paid worship to the Buddhas of the ten regions.

Harsha died in A.D. 646 or 647. He was undoubtedly one of the greatest kings of ancient India. Called upon to rule over two distracted kingdoms in a period of turmoil he succeeded to a large extent in restoring respect for authority in vast tracts of Northern India and won praise as a just and benevolent ruler, punctilious in the discharge of his duties. It is not surprising that years of strenuous warfare did not allow him much time to establish on a firm foundation that ordered government which three generations of Gupta emperors had given to the “middle country”, the benefits of which were warmly appreciated by Fa Hien. It was, however, not due to any lack of vigour on his part. This indefatigable prince was anxious to bring justice to the doors of all. He made visits of inspection throughout his dominions and was prompt to reward the virtuous and punish the evil-doer. But he nursed a higher ambition. The grandson of a “Gupta” princess, Harsha attempted to revive the imperial memories of Samudra Gupta and sought to unite the north and south of India under one sceptre—in vain as the sequel proved. But the imperial splendour of Kanauj that he did so much to augment was hardly dimmed in succeeding ages, and rulers of the remotest corners of India counted it their proudest boast to have “captured Mahodaya-Śrī”, i.e. conquered Kanauj. Harsha also showed a taste for literature and the arts of peace that reminds one of the versatile hero, Samudra Gupta. In his later days he sought to emulate, perhaps unconsciously, the great Aśoka, and the Chinese pilgrim bears eloquent testimony to his pious foundations, his toleration, liberality and

benevolence, all irrespective of caste and creed. One European writer calls him the Akbar of the Hindu period. A great general and a just administrator, he was even greater as a patron of religion and learning. He gathered round himself some of the finest intellects and holiest sages—men like Bāṇa, Mayūra, Divākara and Hiuen Tsang. In one respect he is more fortunate than Samudra Gupta, for we still possess some gems of literature that proceeded, according to tradition, from his pen.

The Kanauj Empire after Harsha

Harsha died either at the end of A.D. 646 or the beginning of 647. The removal of his strong personality let loose forces of disintegration and disorder in the Madhya-deśa (upper Ganges valley). After a reign extending over more than forty years Harsha transmitted his crown to successors who must have struggled to maintain their heritage for some time. Attempts were made by princes like Yaśovarman, and possibly Indra-rāja to restore the fallen fabric of imperialism and win for Kanauj that proud position which it once occupied under Harsha. But their efforts were frustrated by the war-like potentates beyond the limits of the Madhya-deśa to whom the acquisition of the imperial seat of Harsha was the goal of political ambition. The history of the upper Ganges valley from the end of 646 to 836 is one of internal strife and of external invasion which ended when the royal throne of Harsha passed into the hands of the Pratihāras.

It is doubtful if Harsha left a son. He had a daughter who was given in marriage to Dhruvabhāṭa of Valabhī. It is significant that in the Gupta years 326–330, which almost synchronise with Harsha's death, Dharasena IV, son of Dhruvabhāṭa, assumed the imperial titles of *Paramabhāṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara Chakravartī*. He doubtless looked upon himself as the imperial successor in Western India of the Kanauj monarch, who may have been his maternal grandfather. Among other pretenders were a brother of Grahavarman, and one of Harsha's ministers named Arjuna or Arunāśva. The latter seized some provinces in the Ganges valley and came into conflict with a Chinese mission headed by Wang-hiuen-tse. The Chinese envoy received assistance from Tibet and Nepāl and inflicted crushing defeats on the enemy. He also obtained large supplies of cattle and accoutrements from Kumāra (Bhāskaravarman), king of Kāmarūpa, and carried off the usurping minister to China.

In A.D. 672 the most powerful sovereign in the Madhya-deśa

was Ādityasena, son of Mādhava Gupta, the ally of Harsha. Ādityasena signalised his accession to power by the performance of the horse-sacrifice. He strengthened his position by matrimonial alliances with the most illustrious families of his age. Himself a scion of the "later Gupta" dynasty of Mālwa and Magadha, he gave his daughter in marriage to Bhogavarman Maukhari. His granddaughter, born of Bhogavarman's wife, became the queen of Śivadeva of Nepāl, and mother of Jayadeva. This Jayadeva married Rājyamanī, daughter of Harshadeva of the Bhagadatta family of Kāmarūpa.

Ādityasena was followed by three "Gupta" successors, Deva Gupta, Vishnu Gupta, and Jivita Gupta II. Early in the eighth century the throne of Magadha is found in the occupation of a Gauda king.

But the Gaudas were not left in undisturbed possession of Magadha for any length of time. The kingdom of Kanauj revived about this time under the vigorous rule of Yaśovarman, a prince claiming descent from the Lunar race, whose exploits are described in the *Prākṛit* work entitled the *Gaudavaho* by Vākpatirāja. The career of Yaśovarman reminds one of the great Harsha. He led an expedition against the Gauda king and killed him in battle. Having next subjugated the Vaṅgas of Eastern and Central Bengal he turned to the south and reached the Nerbudda. After a brief stay on the banks of that river he returned to his capital through the desert of Rājputāna and the plain of Thānesar. Like Harsha he maintained diplomatic intercourse with the Chinese empire (A.D. 731). He extended his patronage to the illustrious poets Bhavabhūti and Vākpatirāja. In the end this enterprising prince roused the hostility of Lalitāditya, king of Kāshmir, and perished in a conflict with his mighty northern adversary.

Kāshmir

Kāshmir now appears on the scene as a keen competitor of the Gangetic powers. The valley had formed part of the empires of Aśoka, Kanishka and Mihiragula. In the seventh century A.D. it grew into a first-rate power under a local dynasty, styled Kārkota, founded by Durlabhavardhana. Two grandsons of Durlabhavardhana, Chandrāidpa and Muktāpīḍa Lalitāditya, succeeded him. Lalitāditya was an ambitious prince. We have already referred to his victory over Yaśovarman of Kanauj. Kalhana, the historian of Kāshmir, credits him with having led his troops to distant countries. The account of these exploits mostly reads like the

conventional panegyric of an epic hero. More importance attaches to those parts of Kalhana's narrative which refer to his triumphs over Tibetans, Dards and the Turks on the Indus and the slaughter of a king of Gauḍa. Lalitāditya is justly eulogised for his pious foundations, among which the famous temple of Mārtāṇḍa stands pre-eminent.

Jayāpīḍa Vinayāditya emulated the exploits of his grandfather, Lalitāditya, by defeating the kings of Gauḍa and Kanauj. He was a great patron of learning and his court was adorned by Kshirasvāmin, Udbhata, Dāmodara Gupta, Vāmaṇa and other scholars. His fiscal exactions, however, made his name odious. His dynasty came to an end in A.D. 855 and was supplanted by the house of Utpala.

Avantivarman, the founder of the new line, is famous for his irrigation works carried out under the direction of his minister Suyya. The next king, Śaṅkaravarman, son of Avantivarman, extended the boundaries of Kāshmir in several directions. He seems to have come into conflict with the emperor Bhoja I of Kanauj and Lalliya Shāhi of Udabhāṇḍapura or Ūnd on the Indus, and wrested a portion of the Punjab from the Gurjaras. Like Jayāpīḍa of the previous dynasty he harassed the people by fiscal extortions and met his end in a conflict with the people of Uraśā, the modern Hazāra district. A period of turmoil followed. The widowed queen Sugandhā attempted to rule in the name of puppet kings. But she had to encounter formidable opposition from the powerful military factions of the *Tantrins* who made themselves virtual dictators of the state. The *Tantrins* were eventually put down by certain feudal chiefs. In the end an assembly of Brāhmaṇas raised to the throne a member of their own order named Yaśaskara. The line of Yaśaskara was followed by that of Parva Gupta. In the time of Kshema Gupta, son and successor of Parva Gupta, the virtual ruler was his queen Diddā, daughter of a chief of Lohara and descended through her mother from the Shāhis of Udabhāṇḍapura. Diddā, at first, ruled in the name of puppet kings and then seized the crown herself. She kept it till A.D. 1003 when she transmitted her sceptre to her nephew Saṃgrāmarāja, the founder of the Lohara dynasty. A terrible invader now appeared on the scene. The Shāhi kingdom of Udabhāṇḍapura fell after a heroic struggle, in spite of the assistance it received from the ruler of Kāshmir. The kingdom of Saṃgrāmarāja fortunately escaped destruction at the hands of Mahmud of Ghaznī, but it was too much weakened by internal conflicts to interfere successfully in the general affairs of Northern India. It gradually sank to the position of a minor power and finally succumbed to the Muslims in A.D. 1339.

Bengal and the Pāla Empire

Both under Lalitāditya and Vinayāditya Kāshmir had come into conflict with the arms of Gauda, which was the name applied to a people of Western and North-Western Bengal as well as to their country. In the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. this eastern kingdom definitely entered on the scene as a rival of Kanauj and Kāshmir. References to Gauda occur in early literature, notably in the *sūtras* of Pāṇini, the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* and some of the *Purāṇas*. The sister realm of Vaṅga or Eastern and Central Bengal does not seem to be less ancient as it is referred to in the *Dharmasūtras* and the epic. In the days of Maurya and Gupta ascendancy Bengal seems to have formed part of the empire of Magadha, the eastern districts enjoying a certain amount of autonomy.



COIN ATTRIBUTED TO SAMĀCHĀRADEVA

After the fall of the Imperial Guptas we find several local rulers, notably Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva, asserting their independence. Gopachandra was a powerful ruler whose dominions embraced large tracts in both Eastern and Western Bengal. In his days, or those of his immediate successors, the Gauda people emerge as a great military power. Sometime before A.D. 554 they came into conflict with Īśānavarman Maukhari and found a safe refuge in a maritime region. In the next century we find them in possession of the aggressive kingdom of Karpasuvārṇa (in the Murshidabad district). Under the leadership of their king Śaśāṅka they waged war on the aspiring house of Pushyabhūti. The murder of Rājyavardhana and the war of revenge undertaken by his brother and successor Harsha have been mentioned above. Till 619 the power of the Gauda king seems to have remained unshaken, and his suzerainty was acknowledged as far south as Gañjām. But sometime between 619 and 637 Śaśāṅka seems to have died and some years later we find the capital city in the possession of Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa, the eastern ally of Harsha. In the latter half of the seventh century eastern India seems, according to some scholars, to have been shared between

the "later Guptas" of Magadha and the Khadga dynasty of Eastern Bengal. The Khadga chronology is, however, still uncertain. Early in the eighth century both Western and Eastern Bengal were overrun by Yaśovarman of Kanauj. Other conquerors followed in his wake. There was anarchy (*Mātsya nyāya*) in the realm till at last the different sections of the people (*prakṛitis*) raised to the throne a chief named Gopāla, who brought the blessings of peace to the distracted lands.

With Gopāla began the famous Pāla dynasty which, in the last days of its rule, claimed descent from the solar race and also from the sea. Under Pāla rule Bengal was to enjoy a period of prosperity undreamt of in her early annals. In contemporary records the earliest kings of the line are called *Vaṅgapati* and *Gauḍeśvara*, showing that they ruled over the twin kingdoms of Eastern and Western Bengal.

Dharmapāla, son of Gopāla, was one of the greatest kings that ever ruled in Bengal. His accession to the throne probably took place about 780 A.D. In the course of a long reign of at least thirty-two years he raised Bengal to the position of the premier state in Northern India, and did much to restore the greatness of the old imperial city of Pāṭaliputra. He doubtless attempted to shift the political centre of gravity once more to the east, the home territory of the Imperial Mauryas and the great Guptas. He defeated Indrarāja and other enemies, conquered Kanauj and, with the assent of the neighbouring powers, placed on the throne his *protégé* Chakrāyudha. Some records describe him as the conqueror of the whole country from the Himālayas in the north to Gokarṇa in the south. But his successes in the Gangetic Doāb were short-lived. The Rāshtrakūṭas of the Deccan claim to have expelled the Gauḍa king from the territory between the Ganges and the Jumnā during the period A.D. 772 to 794, while the Pratihāras of Western India under Nāgabhaṭa II drove away Chakrāyudha, the vassal king of Kanauj, and made themselves masters of the imperial seat of Harsha certainly before A.D. 836 and probably before even 833.

The death of Dharmapāla probably took place sometime about A.D. 815. His son and successor Devapāla was equally ambitious. He renewed the struggle with the Gurjaras or the Pratihāras of the west and the Dravidians of the south, and his troops claimed victories not only over the neighbouring realms of Orissa and Assam but also over the Huns, a people whom it was the policy of every aspirant for imperial dominion in Northern India to try to overcome. His court poet credits him with having enjoyed the whole earth from the Himālayas to Adam's Bridge. A more modest claim is put

forward in other epigraphic passages which say that his arms reached the Kamboja territory in the north and the Vindhya^a hills in the south. That he maintained some sort of relations with the north-west borderland of India appears probable from his connection with Viradeva, a Brāhmaṇa from Nagarahāra or Jalalābād, who got the important post of abbot of Nālandā in South Bihār. He also received an embassy from Bālaputradeva, ruler of Suvarṇadvīpa or Sumatra (p. 212). He seems to have preferred Monghyr to Pāṭaliputra as the seat of his "camp of victory". He died about A.D. 855 after a reign of at least thirty-nine years, having raised the kingdom of Bengal to a pinnacle of glory that was never again attained in the time of his successors.

After Devapāla the Pāla power seems to have declined. The next king Vīgrahapāla I, nephew of Devapāla, was a weak ruler given to religious activities who finally abdicated in favour of his son Nārāyaṇapāla. The "camp of victory" at Monghyr was still in existence in the seventeenth year of Nārāyaṇapāla, about A.D. 880. After this the famous fort does not find any mention in any Pāla record. A Pratihāra record of 837 tells us that a chieftain named Kakka gained renown by fighting with the Gaudas at Monghyr. It is not improbable that Pāṭaliputra and Monghyr fell before the advancing arms of the Pratihāras. Within a short time, not later than A.D. 898, even Northern Bengal was annexed to the Pratihāra empire. Part of the lost ground seems to have been recovered in the latter part of Nārāyaṇapāla's reign, which extended over more than half a century (at least fifty-four years). Two or three generations later, in the time of Gopāla II or of Vīgrahapāla II, the Pāla power was once more shaken, possibly by the Kambojas, but the fortunes of the family were restored by Mahīpāla I. Mahīpāla is known to have been ruling in the first quarter of the eleventh century A.D.

Mahīpāla I is referred to as the overlord of Gauḍa in a record of A.D. 1026. Parts of Bengal had fallen into the hands of local dynasties which may in some cases have acknowledged in a vague way the suzerainty of the Pāla emperor (*adhipa*). Two of the local families, namely, the Śūras of South-West Bengal and the Chandras of Eastern Bengal, deserve special mention. Śūra princes find mention in literature and inscriptions. The most notable among them is Ādisūra, a name famous in Bengali legend. In the absence of contemporary records it is difficult to say if he can be regarded as an historical figure.

In or about A.D. 1023 the princes of Bengal had to bear the brunt of an attack from Rājendra Chola I, the ambitious ruler

in the Deccan. The Sena power was firmly established in almost the whole of Bengal by the middle of the twelfth century A.D.

The Pāla dynasty produced the last great Hindu emperor whose commands were issued from the historic city of Pātaliputra. Like the Mauryas and the Guptas, the Pāla sovereigns raised a kingdom in Eastern India to a position of pre-eminence in *Āryāvarta*. Like their illustrious predecessors they maintained relations with the distant potentates of the world as known to them, and not only did much to foster religion and culture in India but encouraged their spread to foreign lands. The Pāla period saw the foundation of the Universities of Uddandapura and Vikramaśīla. The epoch was rendered memorable by the activities of artists like Dhīmāna and Vītapāla, of missionaries like Pandit Dharmapāla and Atīsa Dīpaṅkara and scholars like Chakrapāṇi and Sandhyākara. Themselves devoted worshippers of Buddha, the Pāla monarchs were catholic enough to grant toleration to the votaries of Nārāyaṇa and Mahādeva. Throughout the Pāla period the king sought the assistance of Brāhmaṇa ministers. The rise of Kaivarta chiefs to positions of power and wealth in the latter days of the dynasty shows that careers were open to men of talent irrespective of caste and creed.

The Pratihāra Empire

The Pālas were one of the most long-lived dynasties of Indian history, but their supremacy in the Gangetic Doāb was of short duration. The sceptre of Kanauj was not long wielded by the vassals of Dharmapāla, and by A.D. 836 the Pratihāra dynasty was firmly established in the city of Mahodaya (Kanauj). Before the end of the ninth century the power of this new imperial line had extended in all directions and the command of the great Pratihāra king was obeyed all over the wide expanse of territory stretching from Pehoa in the Punjab to Deogarh in Central India, and from Una in Kāthiāwār to Pāhārpur in North Bengal.

In their epigraphic records the Pratihāras claim descent from the Kshatriya Lakshmaṇa (brother of Rāma) of the solar race famed in the *Rāmāyana*, and also from a Brāhmaṇa named Hari-chandra. The prevailing view among modern scholars is that they are a branch of the Gurjara race that began to play an important part in Indian history from the sixth century A.D. The Gurjaras established principalities in the Punjab, Marwar and Broach. In the seventh century A.D. they find mention in the *Harsha-charita* of Bāṇa, the records of Hiuen Tsang and the Aihole inscription of Pulakeśin II. About the middle of the eighth century A.D.

certain Gurjara chiefs are represented as serving a Rāshtrakūṭa monarch as Pratihāra (door-keeper) at a sacrifice performed at Ujjain. The designation Pratihāra probably originated in this way, though a later tradition connects it with Lakshmaṇa, brother of Rāma, who guarded the doors of the latter on a memorable occasion. The connection of the Pratihāra family of Kanauj with Avanti, the district round Ujjain, at some stage in the progress of their power does not seem to be improbable in view of the alleged statement of the Jaina *Harivaṃśa* that Vatsarāja, a distinguished member of the line, was a ruler of Avanti. A different interpretation of the passage in question is, however, suggested by some scholars. The founder of Vatsarāja's family was Nāgabhaṭa I who is usually assigned to the middle of the eighth century A.D. He did much to rehabilitate the power of the Gurjaras which was threatened by the Arabs from Sind and the Chālukyas and the Rāshtrakūṭas from the Deccan. Vatsarāja, grand-nephew of Nāgabhaṭa I, claims to have won the position of *Samrāj*, or emperor, and extended his conquests as far as Bengal, but he was driven to the trackless wilderness by the Rāshtrakūṭa king Dhruva of the Deccan. His son Nāgabhaṭa II won some successes at first. He is credited with having extended his influence from Sind in the north to the Andhra country in the south, from Ānartta in Kāthiāwār in the west to the borders of Bengal in the east. His most notable achievement was the defeat of Dharmapāla, king of Bengal, and the expulsion of his *protégé* Chakrāyudha from Kanauj. But he himself sustained defeats at the hands of the Rāshtrakūṭas, the sworn enemies of his line, who had grown very powerful under the vigorous rule of Govinda III.

The Pratihāra power recovered under Bhoja I, grandson of Nāgabhaṭa II, who was firmly enthroned at Kanauj in A.D. 836. He extended his power northwards as far as Pehoa and southwards as far as the Vindhya, but his further progress was stopped by Śaṅkaravarman of Kāshmir and Dhruva Dhārāvarsha, a Rāshtrakūṭa chieftain of Broach. He was more successful in the east. The Gaudas (of Bengal) were defeated and the Pratihāra empire in the time of his successor stretched as far as Pāhārpur in North Bengal. The empire of Bhoja was visited by the merchant Sulaimān who spoke highly of the strength of his cavalry and of the peace that reigned in his kingdom.

Maḥendrapāla I, son of Bhoja, maintained his father's empire and seems to have extended it towards the east. He imitated Harsha and Yaśovarman in encouraging learning. His court was adorned by the poet Rājasekhara.

Mahendra was followed by his sons Mahipāla, Bhoja II and Vināyakapāla. Some scholars prefer to identify Mahipāla Pratihāra with Vināyakapāla, but their dates do not overlap. Mahipāla maintained his hold on Surāshtra or Kāthiāwār as late as 914 A.D. In the next year Al Masūdī visited his realm and spoke about his horses and camels. In 917 the Pratihāra king was still in possession of the Gangetic Doāb. Rājasekhara speaks about his conquests in the most distant regions of India from Kulūta in the north to Kerala in the south. His power was threatened by Indra III, the Rāshtrakūṭa king of the Deccan, who inflicted a severe defeat on him and took Kanauj. Mahipāla seems to have been restored by a Chandella king. The dramatist Kshemīśvara asserts in his *Chandakauśika*, which he wrote for the Pratihāra king, his patron's triumph over the Karpātas, i.e. the Rāshtrakūṭas. But the Pratihāra empire does not seem to have fully recovered from the blow it received at the hands of the latter.

The succeeding rulers maintained a precarious hold over the upper Ganges valley, parts of Rājputāna and Mālwa, but their former feudatories, notably the Chandellas, aggrandised themselves at their cost. The Chālukyas made themselves independent in Gujarāt, the Paramāras in Mālwa, the Chandellas and Chedis in the country between the Jumna and the Nerbudda. A still more formidable enemy appeared on the scene early in the eleventh century A.D. In 1018 Kanauj, then ruled by Rājyapāla Pratihāra, was taken by Mahmūd of Ghazni. The Pratihāra dynasty probably continued to rule over a small territory till the second quarter of the eleventh century A.D. But their empire was gone and they sank to the position of local chieftains.

The Shāhiyas

The Pratihāras in the days of their greatness had defended Hindustān against the Arab invaders. Towards the end of the tenth century the task of defending the north-western frontier of India devolved on another dynasty, the Shāhiyas. The origin of this dynasty which played such an important role in Indian history may be briefly told. A family of Indianized foreigners had been ruling for a long time in the Kabul valley and adjoining regions to the east as far as the Indus. Al-Biruni calls them descendants of Kanishka and they are known as Turkish Shāhiyas. About the middle of the ninth century A.D. king Lagatūrmān of this dynasty was dethroned by his Brāhmana minister named Kallār who has been identified with Lalliya Shāhi, highly praised in the *Rājataranginī*. He and his

successors are known as Hindu or Brāhmaṇa Shāhiyas or Shāhis. Their capital, Kabul, being seized by the Saffarid Yaḡqub in 870 A.D., they shifted it to Udabhāṇḍapura or Ohind (modern Und), a small village on the right bank of the Sindhu, about fifteen miles above Attock. The Hindu Shāhiya kings had political and matrimonial relations with the rulers of Kashmir. The famous queen of this kingdom, Diddā, was the daughter's daughter of the *Mahārājādhirāja Paramēśvara Sāhi Śrī-Bhīmadeva*. The next important king of this dynasty was Jayapāla (or Jaipāl) who also assumed imperial titles and ruled over an extensive kingdom stretching from Lamghān in Eastern Afghanistan to Sirhind in the Punjab in the east and Multan in the south. The history of this king will be related in Chapter XIII.

CHAPTER XII

THE DECCAN FROM THE FALL OF THE SĀTAVĀHANAS TO THE END OF RĀSHTRAKŪṬA SUPREMACY—RISE OF THE EMPIRES OF KĀÑCHĪ AND KARNĀṬA

Successors of the Sātavāhanas

GAUTAMĪPUTRA ŚRĪ YAJÑA ŚĀTAKARṆĪ, who probably ruled towards the close of the second century A.D., was the last great king of his house. After his death, the Sātavāhana empire began to fall to pieces. The Nāsik region in Mahārāshṭra seems to have been lost to the Ābhīra king Īśvarasena. The Vākātakas rose to power in Berar and some adjoining tracts. The Western Kanarese districts fell into the hands of a line of Śātakarṇis who received the epithet of Chutukulānanda and are sometimes referred to as Chutu-Sātakarṇis to distinguish them from the Sātavāhana Śātakarṇis of the Imperial line. They had their capital at the famous city of Vaijayantīpura or Banavāsi in north Kanara. The old imperial line continued to rule for some time longer in the Andhra country at the mouth of the Kṛishnā till they were supplanted by the Ikshvākus, the rulers belonging to the Ānanda *gotra*, the Bṛihat-phalāyanas, and the Śālāṅkāyanas, who were succeeded by the Vishnukundins. The Śālāṅkāyanas already ruled as petty chieftains as early as the second century A.D. They must have asserted their independence shortly after the fall of the Imperial Sātavāhanas. They came into conflict with the northern emperor Samudra Gupta in the fourth century A.D. Meanwhile another power had arisen in the far south of India with its capital at Kāñchī, modern Conjeeveram near Madras, but exercising control over some of the Kanarese districts and the southern part of the Andhra country at the mouth of the river Kṛishnā. This was the Pallava power. At the time of the famous raid of Samudra Gupta, the most important dynasties in trans-Vindhyan India were the Vākātakas of the Upper Deccan and the Pallavas of Kāñchī. The Gupta conqueror does not appear to have come into direct contact with the Vākātakas. He vanquished, however, a chief named Vyāghrarāja, who may have been identical with a Vākātaka feudatory named Vyāghradeva. Chandra Gupta II, the son and

successor of Samudra Gupta, on the other hand, established direct relations with his Vākāṭaka neighbours and gave his daughter Prabhāvatī in marriage to their king Rudrasena II. The Vākāṭakas in their turn were linked by matrimonial alliances with several dynasties beyond the Godāvarī. The descendants of Rudrasena II and Prabhāvatī continued to rule in the Deccan for several generations till the rise of the Vishṇukundins and their rivals and contemporaries, the Chālukyas of Vātāpi and the Kaṭachchuris or Kalachuris of Nāsik and Mālwa.

The Great Pallavas

To the south of the Vākāṭakas lay the realm of the Pallavas of Kāñchī, one of whose early kings, Vishṇugopa, was captured and then liberated by Samudra Gupta about the middle of the fourth century A.D. The name Vishṇugopa was borne by several members of the Pallava dynasty, and it is not known in what relationship the contemporary of Samudra Gupta stood to the famous Śiva-skandavarman who is mentioned in the early Prākṛit records of the family as a "righteous king of great kings" and the performer of the horse-sacrifice. Inscriptions mention the names of several later Pallava monarchs whose dominions embraced not only Kāñchī but considerable parts of the Telugu and Kanarese districts. The suzerainty of some of them was acknowledged by the early Gangas of eastern and southern Mysore and the early Kadambas who supplanted the Chutu-Śātakarnis of Vaijayantī. We learn from the *Lokavibhāga* that one of the Pallava kings who bore the name of Simhavarman ascended the throne in A.D. 436.

The history of the family becomes more definite from the time of Simhavishṇu, who must have come to the throne in the latter half of the sixth century A.D. This king is credited with having seized the country of the Cholas and vanquished all his southern neighbours, including the ruler of Ceylon. The conquest of Ceylon is also mentioned as an achievement of his grandson Narasimhavarman. Simhavishṇu was a Vaishṇava, and magnificent reliefs representing the king and two of his consorts have been discovered in the Varāha cave at Māmallapuram.

The successor of Simhavishṇu was his son, Mahendravarman I, whose reign saw the beginning of the great struggle between the Pallavas and their northern enemies the Chālukyas of Vātāpi for the mastery of Southern India. The struggle was continued for several generations. The Chālukya king, Pulakeśin II, is said to have caused the splendour of the Pallava lords to be obscured

by the dust of his army and to vanish behind the walls of Kāñchī-pura. On the other hand, Narasimhavarman I, son and successor of Mahendravarman, is said to have vanquished Pulakeśin in many battles and stormed his capital, Vātāpi. The struggle was renewed by Vikramāditya I, son of Pulakeśin II, who claims to have caused the destruction of the family of Narasimha and captured the city of Kāñchī. The Pallava records, however, inform us that the Chālukya attack was finally repulsed. Undaunted by their failures, the Chālukyas once more overran the Pallava dominions under the leadership of Vikramāditya II, great-grandson of Vikramāditya I,



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RATHAS AT MĀMALLAPURAM

in the first half of the eighth century A.D. They routed King Nandivarman Pallavamalla and took the city of Kāñchī. The Pallavas were now threatened by enemies from the south as well as the north. The Pāṇḍyas advanced up to the banks of the Kāverī and engaged in deadly conflicts with the decadent empire of Kāñchī. The *coup de grâce* was given by Āditya Chola who defeated Aparā-jita Pallava and took possession of his kingdom towards the end of the ninth century A.D.

The epoch of the Pallavas of Kāñchī is memorable in the political

and cultural history of India. They built up the first great empire south of the Penner and the Tungabhadra, and carried their arms as far as Ceylon. Many of the Vaishṇava Ālvārs and the Śaiva Nāyanārs (saints) flourished during their rule. Under them Kānchī became a great centre of Brāhmanical as well as Buddhist learning. Mahendravarman I, who bore the significant epithet of *Vichitra-chitta*, "curious-minded", introduced the cave style of architecture and wrote the famous burlesque known as the *Mattavilāsa-prahasana*. The Pallava painting discovered in a cave shrine in the Pudukottai State has also been assigned to his reign. His son Narasimhavarman Mahāmalla gave his name to the port of Māmallapuram, and some of the famous temples cut out of rock boulders known as *Rathas* situated in that spot are ascribed to his reign. A later king, Narasimhavarman II, surnamed Rājasimha, constructed the Kailāsanatha temple at Kānchī.

The Early Chālukyas

The Chālukyas, sworn enemies of the Pallavas of Kānchī, rose to power in Karnāṭa or the Kanarese-speaking country in the sixth century A.D., and had their first capital at Vātāpi, modern Bādāmi in the Bijāpur district of the Bombay Presidency. Like the Chuṭu-Śātakarṇis and the Kadāmbas of Vaijayanti, they are represented as belonging to the Mānavya *gotra* and being Hariti-putras. In later times they claimed descent from the lunar race. Certain inscriptions of a branch of the family refer their origin to Ayodhyā, and one tradition connects the dynastic name with Brahmadeva's *Chuluka* or hand hollowed out for the reception of water. Some writers believe that the Chālukyas were in reality connected with the Chāpas and the foreign Gurjara tribes of the north, but there is very little to be said in support of this conjecture. Inscriptions distinguish between Chālukyas and Gurjaras, and the characteristic nomenclature of the line is distinctly southern.

The real founder of the dynasty of Vātāpi was Pulakeśin I, who signalised his accession to power by the performance of the horse-sacrifice. His sons, Kirtivarman I and Maṅgaleśa, extended the empire in all directions and vanquished the neighbouring rulers, including the Mauryas of the Konkan, the Kadāmbas of Vaijayanti and the Kalachuris of northern Mahārāshṭra and Mālwa. The Kadamba capital was finally reduced by Pulakeśin II, son of Kirtivarman, the most famous king of the line. In the course of a long reign extending from about A.D. 609 to 642, Pulakeśin II

not only consolidated his authority in Mahārāshṭra but overran nearly the whole of the Deccan from the banks of the Nerbudda to the region beyond the Kāverī, thus reviving the memory of the glorious days of Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi. He repulsed an attack by Harsha of Kanauj and claims to have humbled the pride of Mahendravarman of Kāñchī. He annexed Pisṭapura in the Godāvari district, the government of which was entrusted to his younger brother, Kubja Viṣṇuvardhana. Hiuen Tsang, who visited his kingdom about A.D. 641, bears testimony to the fear inspired by the king and the stern vindictive character of his people. According to some authorities, he interchanged letters and presents with the king of Persia, but the matter is not free from doubt. The last days of the king were not happy. The Pallava king, Narasimhavarman I, son and successor of Mahendravarman I, retrieved the disasters of his father's reign, inflicting crushing defeats on Pulakeśin and destroying his capital, Vātāpi.

The Chālukya power was revived by Vikramāditya I, son of Pulakeśin II, who renewed the struggle against his southern enemies. His exploits were emulated and even surpassed by his great-grandson, Vikramāditya II, who actually entered the Pallava capital. A feudatory Chālukya chieftain, belonging to a junior branch of the royal line stationed in South Gujarāt, distinguished himself in a struggle with the formidable Tājikas, who are identified with the Arabs of Sind. In or about 753, the son and successor of Vikramāditya II was overthrown by a chief named Dantidurga who laid the foundation of the next great empire of Karṇāṭa and Mahārāshṭra, that of the Rāshtrakūṭas.

The Great Rāshtrakūṭas

The Rāshtrakūṭas in their later records claim descent from Sātyaki, a Yādava chief of the north, a close associate of Kṛishṇa, famed in epic tradition. Some scholars connect them with the Telugu Redḍis. Others regard them as the main branch of a race of *Kshatriyas* who gave their name to the country of Mahārāshṭra and already figured as rulers in the days of Aśoka. Another theory traces their origin to hereditary officials in charge of *Rāshṭras* or provinces. In several Chālukya records of the eastern Deccan, Rāshtrakūṭas are often referred to as *Kutumbins* or agriculturists in the Andhra country. They are also connected with the Kanarese region, and their own records speak of them as hereditary chiefs of Laṭṭalur, identified with Latur in the Nizām's dominions. It is not improbable that the Rāshtrakūṭas were originally Dravidian

agriculturists who obtained hereditary governorships of provinces under the Chālukyas, and then established an empire, as the Marāṭha Deshmukhs, who served under the Muslim Sultāns of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur, did in a later age.

The Rāshtrakūṭas established an empire which in the days of its greatness extended from South Gujarāt, Mālwa and Bāghelkhand in the north to Tanjore in the south. Their predecessors, the Chālukyas, had simply repulsed an attack of an emperor of Kanauj. The Rāshtrakūṭas, on the other hand, penetrated into the Gangetic Doāb and claim to have stormed the imperial seat of Mahīpāla Pratihāra,—the grandson of Bhoja I of Kanauj. In the Eastern Deccan, however, their dominions did not include the whole of the district at the mouths of the Godāvari and the Kṛishnā. The latter continued to be ruled by a junior branch of the Chālukya family. The pre-eminence of the Rāshtrakūṭas among the rulers of the age is testified to by Arab writers who refer to the *Balhara* (*Vallabharāja*) or beloved prince of Mankir, i.e. the Rāshtrakūṭa monarch of Mānyakheta or Malkhed, as one of the four great sovereigns of the world, entitled to rank with the sovereign of China, the Caliph of Bagdad and the emperor of Constantinople.

The Rāshtrakūṭas were patrons of learning, and one king, Amoghavarsha I, was an author of repute. They were also great builders, and their second king, Kṛishṇa I, uncle of Dantidurga, executed the famous Kailāsa temple at Ellora. The chief interest of Rāshtrakūṭa history in the days of Kṛishṇa I's successors centres round the struggle with the Pratihāras of Kanauj, as that of the Chālukyas of Vātāpi centred round the conflict with the Pallavas of Kāñchi. Dhruva, younger son of Kṛishṇa I, defeated Vatsarāja Pratihāra and expelled a Gauda king, probably Dharmapāla, from the Gangetic Doāb. Under Govinda III, son and successor of Dhruva, the Rāshtrakūṭas verily became invincible. They exacted tribute from the Pallavas of Kāñchi and installed one of their princes on the throne of South Gujarāt. Nāgabhaṭa II, son of Vatsarāja, sustained defeats at their hands. Dharmapāla of Bengal and his vassal, Chakrāyudha, are said to have offered their submission. The next king, Amoghavarsha I, had a very long reign (about A.D. 815–877). He removed his capital to Mānyakheta or Malkhed in the Nizām's dominions. He could not successfully emulate his father's exploits in the far north as he was involved in a struggle with the Chālukyas of Vengi at the mouths of the Godāvari and the Kṛishnā. But the Rāshtrakūṭas in his time succeeded in checking the southern progress of Bhoja I of Kanauj. He also attached the more important rulers of the far south to the

Rāshtrakūṭa interest by marriage alliances. Indra III, great-grandson of Amoghavarsha I, finished the work of his illustrious ancestors, Dhruva and Govinda III, by inflicting a crushing defeat on Mahīpāla, the Pratihāra king of Kanauj, and taking temporary possession of his capital city. His nephew, Kṛishṇa III, was the last great king of the line. His dominions extended from Jura in Bāghelkhand to Tanjore in the Kāverī valley. In 973, the Rāshtrakūṭa dynasty was overthrown by Taila II, a feudatory of Kṛishṇa III, who claimed descent from the early Chālukyas of Vātāpi.

The Later Chālukyas

Taila was the founder of the Chālukya dynasty of Kalyāṇa or Kalyāṇi in the Nizām's dominions. His successors became involved in a contest with the Cholas of Tanjore, descendants of king Āditya who had crushed the Pallava king Aparājita. The Cholas now fast rose to power under Rājarāja and his son, Rājendra Chola I. While the Cholas and Chālukyas were engaged in bitter feuds in the south, thrones and dynasties in Northern India were falling before the onslaught of the famous *Hammīra*, Sultan Mahmūd of Ghaznī or Ghazna. The banner of Islam was unfurled in the Land of the Five Rivers and the Valley of the Twin Rivers, the Upper Ganges and the Jumnā. The arms of the Ghaznavid invader penetrated into the interior of Kāthiāwār and reached the temple of Somnāth. Indian history enters on a new epoch.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PASSING OF THE OLD HINDU KINGDOMS

The Coming of the Arabs

IN the western part of Asia lies a vast country called Arabia, a land of rocks and deserts with a few oases and fertile valleys, thinly peopled by a hardy and sturdy folk. In this country, at a short distance from the western sea coast, stands the holy city of Mecca—where sometime in the year 570 was born the great Prophet, the founder of a religion that preached the unity of God, and roused the people to energy and unbounded enthusiasm. Under the successors of the Prophet, called Khalifas or Caliphs, who led the Faithful from A.D. 632, the arms of the Moslems advanced in all directions, and the banner of Islam floated over many countries from Irān to Spain. From the beginning the Arabs had their eyes on the rich ports of Western India and the outlying parts of the north-west borderland. As early as the time of the great Pulakeśin II, an army was sent to Thanā near Bombay (c. A.D. 637). This was followed by expeditions to Broach, the Gulf of Debal (in Sind), and Al-Kikan (the district round Kelāt). About the middle of the seventh century, the satrapy of Zaranj in Southern Afghānistān fell into the hands of the Arabs. The turn of Makrān in Baluchistān came next. The Arabs now made repeated onslaughts on the Shāh of Kābul, supposed to be a descendant of the great Kanishka, and the *Ratbil* of Zābul in the upper valley of the Helmund river and some adjoining districts. The latter succumbed after a brave struggle (A.D. 870). The Turkī Shāhiya kings of Kābul maintained a precarious existence till the closing years of the ninth century when they were supplanted by Kallār, usually identified with Lalliya, the founder of the Hindu Shāhiya dynasty of Udabhāṇḍapura (Waihand, Ohind or Und on the Indus).

Meanwhile, the Arabs had followed up their success in Baluchistān by the conquest of Sind. That province figures in the narrative of Bāṇa as one of the territories overrun by Prabhākaravardhana and his more famous son, Harsha. In the days of Hiuen Tsaing the throne was occupied by a Śūdra dynasty which gave way to

a Brāhmaṇa family founded by Chach. Dāhar or Dāhir, son of Chach, was on the throne when al-Hajjaj, governor of Irāk, incensed at the action of certain pirates of Debal, sent several expeditions to Sind. The earlier incursions were repulsed by Dāhir. Thereupon al-Hajjaj entrusted the work of punishing the Indian king to his nephew and son-in-law, Muhammad ibn-Kāsim. The young commander stormed Debal, captured Nerun and some other cities and strongholds, and pushed on to the western bank of the Indus. His work was greatly facilitated by the treachery of certain Buddhist priests and renegade chiefs who deserted their sovereign and joined the invader. With the assistance of some of these traitors, Muhammad crossed the vast sheet of water separating his army from that of Dāhir and gave battle to the Indian ruler near Raor (A.D. 712). Dāhir offered a brave resistance, but was defeated and killed. The fort of Raor fell next after a heroic defence by the widowed queen. The invaders now pushed on to Bahmanābād and Alor, which submitted. The turn of Multān came next. The whole of the lower Indus valley was now dominated by the Arabs. But the invaders had no mind to stop there. Already in the time of Muhammad ibn-Kāsim minor operations were carried on in the neighbouring provinces. A later governor, Junaid or Junayd, pursued a more aggressive policy and sent expeditions against Marmad (Marwar ?), al-Mandal (Mandor ? near Viramgam ?), Dahnaj, Barwas (Broach), Ujjain, Malibah (Mālwa), Baharimad, al-Bailaman (Vallamaṇḍala ?) and al-Jurz (Gurjara). According to Indian inscriptions, the territories overrun by the invaders included Sind, Cutch, Surāshṭra or Kāthiāwār, Chavotaka (some Chāpa principality of Gujarāt or Western Rājputāna), a Maurya principality apparently in southern Rājputāna or Mālwa, and the Gurjara territory apparently round Bhinmal or Broach. The progress of the Arabs was stopped by the Chālukyas in the south, the Pratihāras in the east, and the Kārkoṭas in the north. But a new scene opened with the foundation of the kingdom of Ghaznī by Alptigīn in or about A.D. 962.

Fall of the Shāhiya Dynasty of Udabhāṇḍa

Alptigīn was formerly a slave of the Samanid rulers of Central Asia. This enterprising chief made himself independent in Ghaznī and conquered a part of the kingdom of Kābul. He died in A.D. 963. In A.D. 977 his sceptre passed into the hands of his son-in-law, Sabuktigīn. He encroached on the dominions of the Shāhiya ruler Jayapāla to whom reference has been made above. In order to put a stop to the depredations of Sabuktigīn, Jayapāla advanced towards

Ghaznī and met his enemy near a place called Ghūzak between Ghaznī and Lamghan. A snow-storm compelled Jayapāla to conclude a humiliating peace, but he soon broke his engagements and brought on his head the wrath of the Sultān. The latter carried fire and sword into the territory of his antagonist and seized the districts in the neighbourhood of Lamghan. In 997 Sabuktigīn died, and in the next year the crown went to his famous son, Mahmud. In 1001 the new Sultān inflicted a crushing defeat on Jayapāla near the city of Peshāwār. Unable to survive this disgrace, the defeated king burnt himself on a funeral pyre and was succeeded by his son, Ānandapāla (A.D. 1002 or 1003). In 1006 Mahmud took Multān, but the final subjugation of the city was postponed till 1010. In 1008 he routed the troops of Ānandapāla, led by prince Brāhmaṇapāla, at the battle of Waihand, and pursued the fugitives as far as Bhimnagar.

Ānandapāla continued to offer resistance from the fastnesses of the Salt Range (Nandana). His successor, Trilochanpāla, carried on the struggle with the assistance of Saṃgrāmarāja of Kāshmir. In the end he was compelled to retire to the east and conclude an alliance with the Chandella ruler of Kālinjar and other princes of Mid-India. But he was again defeated on the river Ruhut (Rāhib) identified by some with the Rāmgangā. He was assassinated in A.D. 1021–1022. With the death of his son and successor, Bhīma, in 1026 the dynasty came to an end. Both al-Biruni and Kalhaṇa bear testimony to the courage and magnanimity of this noble line of kings who poured out their blood like water in defending the north-western gates of their country against the invader.

Mahmud did not remain content with the laurels he won in the Punjab. In 1014 he took Thānesar, and in the following years made an unsuccessful attempt to conquer the vale of Kāshmir. He also burnt the temple of Mathurā. In 1018 he sacked Kanauj and extinguished the once powerful empire of the Pratihāras. In 1022–1023 he received the submission of Gwālior and Kālinjar. His most famous expedition, that against Somnāth in Kāṭhiāwār, was undertaken in 1025. The fall of the most celebrated Hindu shrine of the age in 1026 synchronised with the extinction of the Hindu Shāhiya kingdom of the Punjab. Four years later the Sultān died.

Mahmud's expeditions were mostly regular raids undertaken mainly with the object of destroying Hindu temples, desecrating Hindu idols and plundering the wealth of the country. Altogether seventeen expeditions are set to his credit by Muslim chroniclers who describe with glee the wanton destruction and massacre on a

large scale by Mahmud and the fabulous wealth carried by him to Ghaznī after each expedition. It is said that from Nagarkot alone he plundered "700,000 golden dinārs, 700 *mans* of gold and silver plates, 200 *mans* of pure gold in ingots, 2,000 *mans* of unwrought silver, and twenty *mans* of various jewels, including pearls, corals, diamonds and rubies."

The only permanent results of his arduous campaigns were the annexation of the Hindu Shāhiya kingdom and certain other districts in the Punjab and the north-west borderland and the destruction of the morale of the Hindu armies. The raids of Mahmud must have made a profound impression on the minds of the great Rājput powers of Western and Central India that sought to divide among themselves the imperial heritage of the Pratihāras. During the period 1030–1192, that is to say from the death of Mahmud to the arrival on the scene of Muhammad of Ghur, the princes of the Indian interior enjoyed comparative immunity from foreign attacks. The Ghaznavid Sultāns now and then harried certain territories, and on one occasion one of their generals advanced up to Benares and sacked the holy city. But on the whole, the invaders could not make much headway. The terror inspired by their ravages had, however, lasting consequences.

Revival of the Vikramādityan Tradition

The situation in the latter part of the eleventh and first three quarters of the twelfth century was not unlike that in the sixth century A.D. The old empires of the Pratihāras and the Pālas were falling to pieces like the Gupta empire after Buddha Gupta. The task of defending Hindustān fell upon their former feudatories who now set up as independent sovereigns. The fight with the Yamīnī Turks and their successors became as engrossing a subject as the earlier struggle with the Huns. There was a revival of the Vikramādityan tradition, and the example of the great hero who braved a Śaka king in his own city, and that of his famous grandson who beat back the incursions of the Huns and restored an empire after vanquishing the enemies of his family, must have inspired the greater rulers of the new age—kings like Gāṅgeyadeva of Chedi, Sindhurāja of Mālwa, and Tribhuvanamalla of Kalyāṇ, who called themselves Vikramāditya or the new Sāhasāṅka. The new spirit is well illustrated by the execution of the pusillanimous Pratihāra king Rājyapāla by a Kachchapaghāta chief who was "anxious to serve Vidhādharadeva", and the attempt of Tribhuvanamalla Vikramāditya VI to supersede the Śaka era by a

new national reckoning. But the cases of Rājyapāla, the representative of the Imperial Pratihāras, and of Tribhuvanamalla himself who fought against his own brother, are symptomatic of the weakness of the Hindu princes—their internal strife and failure, except on rare occasions, to take concerted action in a time of national crisis. The Hindus of the age, moreover, lacked the invigorating and dynamic influence of a new impulse that was then moving vast masses of mankind in Western and West Central Asia.

Bhīma I, the Chālukya or Solanki king of Gujarāt, had failed to bar the route to the holy shrine of Somnāth. After the invader was gone, he sought to repair the ravages which the Turks had inflicted on the habitations of the gods. He began to build at Somnāth a temple of stone in place of the former temple of brick and wood. His general, Vimala, built the famous Jaina temple at Abu, known as Vimala Vasabi. Other edifices were constructed in the time of the successors of Bhīma, particularly in the days of Siddharāja Jayasimha and Kumārapāla. Two later rulers, Mūlarāja II Solanki and Viradhavala Vāghela, attained greater success than Bhīma I in repelling the attacks of invaders. Two officers of Viradhavala, Vastupāla and Tejahpāla, have immortalised their names by the construction of magnificent shrines at Śatruñjaya, Gīrnār and Abu. In course of time the feelings of hostility roused by Turkish aggression wore off to a certain extent and king Arjuna of Gujarāt had the broadmindedness to endow a mosque erected by a Muslim ship-owner of Ormuz, and provided for the expenses of certain Shiite festivals. He further laid down that under the management of the Muslim community of Somnāth any surplus was to be made over to the holy districts of Mecca and Medina. In 1297, Gujarāt passed into the hands of Sultān 'Alā-ud-dīn Khalji of Loh.

The throne of the Paramāras of Mālwa was, in the days of Sabuktigin, occupied by the famous Muñja, a great patron of poets, whose power was crushed by Taila II, the Chālukya king of the Deccan. His brother and successor, Sindhurāja, assumed the significant title of Navasāhasāṅka, that is, the new Sāhasāṅka or Vikramāditya. Bhoja, son and successor of Sindhurāja, claims victories over the Turushkas or Turks. He made his name immortal by his patronage of learning, just as the Gujarāt statesmen did by their temples. A versatile scholar, he wrote treatises on numerous subjects, including poetics, rhetoric, polity, philosophy, astronomy and architecture. He also established a college for Sanskrit studies. The construction of temples and the encouragement of Sanskrit

culture seem to have been parts of a common programme. The attempts of Pericles to restore Greek temples and foster Greek learning after the ravages of the Persian wars may be recalled in this connection. The example of Bhoja was imitated by Hindu statesmen in later ages, notably by the rulers of Vijayanagar.

The Chandellas of Jejākabhukti or Bundelkhand had, under Dhaṅga, Gaṇḍa, and Vidyādhara, possibly attempted to help the cause of the Shāhis of Udabhāṇḍa, but their efforts proved unavailing. Vidyādhara, however, seems to have matured plans, along with the Kalachuri king and Bhoja of Mālwa, for the restoration of the prestige of Hindu arms. But the power of his family soon declined. There was a revival under Kirtivarman Chaudella in the closing years of the eleventh century, but some of his successors were not so strong as he was. One of them, Paramardideva, suffered defeats at the hands of Prithvirāja III, the Chauhan king of Ajmer and Delhi. The power of the Chandellas was shattered by Qutb-ud-din Aibak in A.D. 1202. Like the contemporary dynasties of Gujarāt and Mālwa, the Chandellas showed their interest in the work of reconstruction by the building of temples at Khajuraho and the encouragement of poets like Kṛishṇa Miśra who adorned the court of Kirtivarman.

Politically, a more important rôle was played by the Kalachuri kings, Gāṅgeyadeva and his son Lakshmi Karna. The former, as already stated above, assumed the title of Vikramāditya and took under his protection the holy cities of Allahābād and Benares. Lakshmi Karna seems to have made himself master of the Southern Doāb and did much to revive the glorious traditions associated with the empires of Harsha and Bhoja I. He conciliated the rulers of Bengal by matrimonial alliances and pushed his conquests southwards as far as Kalinga. Had he lived longer, he might have restored the shattered fabric of imperialism in northern India and erected an effective barrier against the advance of the Turks. His career was cut short by a hostile combination of the rulers of Gujarāt, Mālwa, Bundelkhand and the Deccan. The Kalachuris still retained considerable power under his son and grandson, but the control of the Madhya-deśa (upper Ganges valley) soon passed into the hands of the famous house of Gāhaḍavāla.

The founder of the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty was Chandradeva who rose to power in the closing decade of the eleventh century. His grandson, Govinda Chandra, was the real ruler of the Madhya-deśa for half a century, first as crown prince (1104–1114) and later on as king (1114–1154). He founded an empire embracing the greater part of the present United Provinces and Bihār. He successfully

defended Jetavana (in northern Oudh), Benares and other holy places of Buddhists and Hindus alike against the Turks. But a rival empire was established in the west by the Chauhan Vigraharāja IV with seats at Ajmer and Delhi. The latter city was probably founded by a Tomara chieftain about the middle of the eleventh century A.D., and it was from the Tomaras that the Chauhans obtained possession of this famous capital. Prithvirāja III, nephew of Vigraharāja IV, came into conflict with Jayachandra (Jai Chand), grandson of Govinda Chandra. The rivalry of the Chauhans and the Gāhaḍavālas weakened them both till all of them were swept away by a fresh deluge that was gathering force in the wilds of Ghur in Afghānistān.

Bengal under the later Pālas and the Senas

Sheltered by the Kalachuris and the early Gāhaḍavālas who for more than a century protected the Madhya-deśa against a rush of invasion from the north-west, the local dynasts of Eastern India passed through vicissitudes of a different kind. The name of the Pāla sovereign of Gauda was still invoked in distant Benares as late as A.D. 1026. In the following decades, the Pālas entered into close relations with Lakshmī Karṇa, the great king of Chedi. The passing away of Karṇa almost coincided with a fresh disaster that fell to the lot of the Gauda empire. A local rising in North Bengal drove the Pālas from Varendrī. The power of the house of Dharmapāla was restored by Rāmapāla, mainly with the assistance of his Rāshtrakūṭa relations. But the restored kingdom had no long lease of life left to it, being ultimately overthrown in Bengal by Vijaya Sena, scion of a family that came from the Deccan. The struggle between indigenous and foreign military chieftains in Bengal ended in the victory of the latter.

The conqueror founded a new line, that of the Senas. The ancestors of the new king came from Karṇāṭa in the Deccan. They established a principality in Western Bengal which came into prominence under Sāmanta Sena. Sāmanta Sena seems to have retained some connection with his southern compatriots. After him came Hemanta Sena. Vijaya Sena, son of Hemanta Sena, allied himself with the illustrious family of the Śūras and founded the independent sovereignty of his own dynasty. He vanquished the king of Gauda, apparently of Pāla lineage, and the neighbouring princes of North Bihār, Assam and Orissa. He also laid the foundation of the city of Vijayapura in Western Bengal, which became the metropolis of the Sena family. Vikramapura in

Eastern Bengal, which was apparently conquered from the Yādava Varmans, possibly served as the second capital. It was certainly graced occasionally by the presence of the Sena sovereign.

The son and successor of Vijaya Sena was Ballāla Sena, a name famous in Bengali legend as the reputed founder of *Kulinism*, a system of nobility. He is also credited with the authorship of two notable works, the *Dānasāgara* and the *Adbhutasāgara*.

Ballāla Sena's son, Lakshmaṇa Sena, probably began to rule in A.D. 1178-1179 or 1184-1185, though some scholars push the date of his accession much further back and regard him as the founder of the Lakshmaṇa Sena era of A.D. 1119. He seems to have served his apprenticeship in the work of government as viceroy or military governor in charge of some district in Kalinga. On coming to the throne, he distinguished himself as a conqueror and a patron of learning. He claims to have pushed his conquests as far as Kalinga, reduced Kāmarūpa to subjection and vanquished the king of Benares, who is no other than the Gāhaḍavāla king of Kanauj. Among the poets who graced his court, the most eminent were Jayadeva, the author of the *Gīta-Govinda*, and Dhoyī, the author of the *Pavanadūta*. The last-mentioned work contains an interesting description of the Sena capital. The Senas, however, failed to stem the tide of Muslim invasion once the dyke erected by the Gāhaḍavālas was broken. Rai Lakhmaniya, usually identified with Lakshmaṇa Sena, had to flee before the advancing arms of Malik Ikhtiyār-ud-dīn Muhammad Khalji towards the close of the twelfth or early in the thirteenth century. His sons, Viśvarūpa Sena and Keśava Sena, maintained the struggle against the "Garga Yavanas", that is to say, the Muslim invaders from the Kābul valley, and preserved their independence in Eastern Bengal till the latter half of the thirteenth century.

The Later Chālukyas and the Cholas

Karnāṭa, the home territory of the Senas, was from 973 to 1190 dominated, with a short intermission, by the Chālukya family established by Taila II. While the Shāhis of Udabhāṇḍa were trying to defend the north-western gates of India against the Turks of Ghazni, the Chālukyas were engaged in bitter feuds with the Paramāras of Mālwa and the Cholas of Tanjore. They do not appear to have actually helped the foreign invaders like their predecessors, the Rāshtrakūṭas. The Cholas, under Rājarāja I,

Successors of the Imperial Chālukyas and Cholas

The independent Yādava kingdom of Devagiri was founded by Bhillama and was raised by his grandson Siṅghana to the position of the premier kingdom of the Deccan. Learning was encouraged, and a college of astronomy was established for the study of the works of Bhāskarāchārya, the celebrated astronomer. The age of the later Yādavas saw the composition of the famous works of Hemādri, Bopadeva, and Jñāneśvara. The rulers of Devagiri, however, proved unequal to the task of defending the Deccan against the northern invader in the manner of Gautamīputra and Pulakeśin II of old. In 1294 the troops of 'Alā-ud-din Khaljī swooped down upon Devagiri and exacted a heavy contribution from Rāmachandra, the Yādava king. In 1306–1307 Malik Kāfur again invaded the Yādava dominions and forced the king to pay tribute. The son of Rāmachandra was killed about 1312, and his son-in-law was flayed alive about 1317. Hindu sovereignty in Mahārāshṭra came to an end and was not restored till the seventeenth century.

The Kākatīyas rose to power under Proharāja II. His grandson, Gaṇapati, extended his dominions as far as Kāñchī in the south. The kingdom flourished under Rudramma, daughter of Gaṇapati, who is highly extolled by the Venetian traveller, Marco Polo. The power of the dynasty was destroyed by the Sultāns of Delhi early in the fourteenth century.

The Hoysalas of Dorasamudra attained great power under Viṣṇuvardhana and his grandson, Vira Ballāla II. Under later kings they conquered a part of the Tamil country. Vira Ballāla III, the last notable ruler of the house, sustained defeats at the hands of Kāfur, the general of 'Alā-ud-din Khaljī, and finally perished in or about A.D. 1342.

The Pāṇḍya kingdom, which won fame in the thirteenth century as the dominant power in the Tamil country and a great centre of international trade, was overrun by Kāfur early in the fourteenth century. After a brief period of Muslim rule, it was absorbed into the empire of Vijayanagar.

Orissa became a powerful kingdom under Anantavarman Chōḍa Gaṅga whose descendants defended their dominions with some amount of success against the Muslim conquerors of Bengal. The Gaṅga line came to an end in 1434 when it was supplanted by the famous Kapilendra. The royal family founded by him was also very powerful and ruled over an extensive empire. The kings successfully defended Orissa against the attacks of Muslim rulers from the north and west, and sometimes even invaded their dominions.

It was not till 1568 that Orissa was finally conquered by the Muslims.

Like the Rājput kingdoms of the north, the princes of Southern India failed to offer a combined resistance to invaders and fell one by one. Only the Hindus beyond the Kṛishṇā and the Tūṅgabhadrā rallied under the banner of Harihara and Bukka, and for several centuries maintained their independence in the far south of India.

CHAPTER XIV

INDIAN CIVILISATION UNDER THE IMPERIAL GUPTAS AND THEIR SUCCESSORS

The Administrative System

THE period of the Gupta emperors and their successors saw the gradual disappearance of non-monarchical states. After the sixth century, monarchy becomes the only form of government that demands serious attention. Kingship was in most cases hereditary. The ruler was at times nominated by his predecessor, but some cases of election by the people or the nobles are recorded. Among notable instances of popular election are the enthronement of Gopāla by the *Prakritis* or constituent elements of the body politic of Bengal, and the choice of Brahmapāla by the people of Assam. We have also a similar instance in Southern India where Nandivarman Pallavamalla was raised to the throne by the *mūla prakritis*. More often the choice of a sovereign in a time of crisis was entrusted to a selected body of state nobles or Brāhmaṇas. In the kingdom of Thānesar it was a council of nobles headed by Bhaṇḍi that offered the crown to Harsha. Yaśaskara of Kāshmīr was chosen by an assembly of Brāhmaṇas. Kumārapāla of Gujarāt was selected by the state nobles sitting in council. Even in cases of nomination by a preceding ruler, the presence of the councillors (*Sabhyas*) and princes of the blood at the time of the formal act of selection was perhaps deemed to be necessary. There was no bar to the succession of a female, at least in certain parts of India, notably Kāshmīr, Orissa and the Telugu country.

The divine character of kingship received wide acceptance in the period under review. In the Allahābād Pillar inscription Samudra Gupta is not only represented as equal to Kuvera, Varuṇa, Indra and Yama, the presiding deities of the four quarters, but is considered to be the Incomprehensible Being who is the cause of creation and destruction, a god dwelling on earth, who was mortal only in that he performed the acts necessary according to the conventions of the world. In the literature of the age the king is considered to be the incarnation of Justice and the representative of Viṣṇu, that is, God in his aspect as the Preserver. Like Viṣṇu,

the ruler in certain parts of India was styled Śrī Prithvī Vallabha, that is, the Beloved of the Goddess of Fortune and of the Earth Goddess. Voices of protest against the view that the king was divine are raised now and then. Bāṇa regards the theory of the king's divinity as a delusion. "Though subject to mortal conditions, kings look on themselves as having alighted on earth as divine beings with a superhuman destiny; they employ a pomp in their undertakings only fit for gods and win the contempt of all mankind. They welcome this deception of themselves by their followers. From the delusion of their own divinity established in their minds, they are overthrown by false ideas." The old theory persists that the rulers do not exist for their own good but owe a debt to the people which they can discharge only by good government. The ideal ruler is he who "possesses an inner soul pervaded by the inclination for the acquittance of debts and obligations, and is occupied with the welfare of all mankind". The Chinese pilgrims, Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang, the Arab merchant Sulaimān, and the Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, bear testimony to the fact that the governments of Chandra Gupta II, Harsha, Bhoja I and Rudramma (Rudrāmbā) actually tried to translate this noble maxim into practice.

Many kings of the age were doughty fighters and lovers of manly sports like wrestling combats with wild beasts. But they were not mere rough soldiers and war-lords. A notable trait in the character of some of the most illustrious rulers of the period under review is their love of learning and the fine arts. In this respect the versatile Samudra Gupta in the north, and the "curious-minded" (*Vichitra-chitta*) Mahendravarman in the south, set examples that were imitated by some of the ablest among their successors.

Some of the occupants of the throne were themselves scholars and poets of no mean repute. Among royal authors, Harsha of Kanauj, Mahendravarman of Kāñchī, Amoghavarsha I of Malkhed, Bhoja of Dhārā, Someśvara III of Kālyāṇa, Vigharāja IV of Ajmer, Ballāla Sena of Bengal and Aparārka of the Northern Konkāṇ deserve special mention as they have left works that are studied even at the present day. The earliest among them figure mainly as dramatists, but later kings were interested in a wide range of subjects. Several rulers are justly entitled to the designation of polymath. The latest kings took special interest in legal and astrological studies.

Kings normally "held all the levers and handles which worked the governmental machinery". They maintained the laws of the realm and were responsible for defending the people against

external attacks. They administered justice, usually led troops in war and had the largest share in the formulation of policy. But it was impossible to shoulder the burden of administration without assistance. "A single wheel could not move." Hence sovereigns had to employ ministers. In the early Gupta period, the most important among these functionaries were the *Mantrin* (confidential adviser), *Sāndhivigrahika* (minister in charge of peace and war), and *Akshapaṭalādhikṛita* (minister in charge of records). There were also important officials whose duties were mainly of a military character. Such were the *Mahābalādhikṛita* and the *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka*. There was, however, no clear-cut division between civil and military officials. A *Mantrin* could become a *Mahābalādhikṛita*, and the post of *Amātya* could be combined with that of *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka*. The office of a minister (*Sachiva*) was often hereditary. One class of officials had the special designation of *Kumārāmātya*. They figure as ministers for peace and war, generals, councillors, feudatories and district officers. Some of them were directly under the sovereign; others were attached to princes or placed under provincial governors. The expression *Kumāra* in the designation *Kumārāmātya* may correspond to the *Elaya*, *Pina*, *Chikka*, or *Immadi* of South India, and is best rendered by the term "cadet". In the far south of India during the Chola period, we have an important functionary, styled *Okaināyagam*, who had to approve every order issued by the king.

With the efflux of time need was felt for the elaboration of the administrative machinery in certain departments. This was particularly the case in regard to the Foreign Office where special *Sāndhivigrahikas* were appointed to deal with the affairs of certain definite areas. Thus, in the records of certain rulers of the Deccan we find references to a *Karṇāṭaka Sāndhivigrahika*. In certain records we have references to an official styled *Mahāpradhāna* and another designated *Sarvādhikārin* whose functions might have resembled those of the *Mukhyapradhāna* of the Marāṭha period and the *Sarvārthachintuka* of Manu. Though the number of ministers was not definitely fixed, Manu's recommendation of seven or eight ministers may have been followed at times. It is doubtful if there was a central *Mantriparishad* comparable to the *Parishā* of the Maurya inscriptions. If such an institution did exist, it does not find prominent mention in the epigraphs. The *Sabhyas* referred to in the Allahābād Pillar inscription in connection with the nomination scene of Samudra Gupta may have been courtiers attending a *Durbar* as well as members of a central council. An important functionary in several States governed by Hindu kings was the

Rāja-guru. The *Purohita* or royal chaplain, though a prominent personage in a Brāhmanical court, does not figure in the records of devout Buddhist kings.

Justice was often administered by the sovereign himself or a high official at the centre or in the provinces. Judges at the headquarters of a district had apparently the assistance of the chief *Seths* and *Kāyasthas* of the locality, representatives of the commercial and official classes. In villages, justice was administered by royal officials with the help of the members of the village council or assembly. In certain cases the assembly alone sat in judgment and passed sentence. Special courts of self-governing corporations are also alluded to in literature. The jury system, according to some authorities, is found to have been in full swing at least in southern India. Judicial methods included trial by ordeal.

Indian armies in the period under review consisted mostly of elephants, infantry and cavalry. Chariots gradually fell into disuse. Some of the kings, especially in the desert tracts of Rājputāna, maintained camel corps. A few maritime States had their navies with which they effected the conquest of riparian principalities or islands scattered in the Indian Ocean. Many provinces, especially in the south, had no good breed of horses and had to import animals from Arabia. Marco Polo refers to the unfavourable climate of South India in which these horses could not thrive. He also speaks of the ignorance of the Indian horse-keepers. Recruitment to the army was not confined to a particular caste. Some of the ablest commanders of the period were Brāhmaṇas. A successful leader of North Bengal in the eleventh century A.D. belonged to the Kaivarta caste. Armies of the period included hereditary forces as well as local militia and feudal levies.

The principal sources of revenue were the *bhāga* or the king's share (normally one-sixth) of the produce of the land, certain additional imposts on the rural population, as well as duties at ports, ferries and fortified stations. Rulers also got incomes from the crown-lands, mines, etc., and tribute from vassal chiefs. Taxes were often collected in kind, but payments in cash were also allowed. Forced labour (*Viśhṭi*) was not unknown, and we hear of a special kind of *corvée* called *Bhoṭṭa-viśhti* in lands on the borders of Tibet. Extra taxation was resorted to in times of emergency, from which even temples were not exempted. Mention may be made in this connection of imposts apparently levied by the central government to deal with the menace from marauding tribes. To this category belong possibly the *Malla-kara* and

Turushka-danḍa of mediaeval epigraphs. Extra cesses were also levied for special purposes by local authorities.

Kingdoms and empires were divided for administrative purposes into units styled *Bhukti*, *Deśa*, *Rāshṭra* and *Maṇḍala*. *Bhukti* is a very common designation in the north. It usually meant a province or administrative division under an officer styled *Uparika*. It was usually subdivided into *Vishayas* or *Maṇḍalas*. The post of *Vishayapati* (that is the officer in charge of a *Vishaya* or district) was filled either by a royal official styled *Kumārāmātya*, or *Āyuktaka*, or by a feudatory *Mahārāja*. The *Vishayapati* was sometimes assisted in the work of administration by the guild-president, the chief scribe and other leading men of the locality. In the far south of India the largest administrative division was the *Maṇḍala*, which was subdivided into *Valanāḍus* or into *Nāḍus* and *Koṭṭams*. The lowest administrative units were the *Kūrṇam* (union of villages) and *grāma* (village), each under its own headman who was assisted by assemblies (*Ūr*, *mahāsabhā*). The village headman had his counterpart in the *nagarapati* of cities. In certain rural areas the village assembly consisted of the whole adult population, in others of *Brāhmaṇas* or a few great men who were selected by a kind of ballot. The assembly appointed committees to look after specific departments, like tanks, temples, justice, etc. The work of these self-governing bodies was supervised by royal officers (*Adhikārin*). Towns and cities had, as already stated, special officers styled *nagarapati*, and certain Gupta records refer to the existence of town councils (*Parishad*).

Social Conditions

Social conditions underwent rapid changes during the period under review. This is hinted at by those epigraphs that refer to some of the most distinguished rulers of the age as "employed in settling the system of castes and orders" and in "keeping the castes confined to their respective spheres of duty". Attempts in this direction were not, however, always crowned with success. We find members of the priestly and artisan classes taking to the profession of arms, and members of the soldier caste figuring as merchants. *Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras* figure as rulers of mighty kingdoms. Marriage rules were still somewhat elastic, and inter-marriages between peoples of different castes, creeds and races were not unknown. Complications were introduced by the influx of foreigners, sections of whom were admitted into the framework of caste. Some of the earlier foreign immigrants rank as degraded *Kshatriyas* in the legal codes. Those who came after the fall of

the early Gupta empire and carved out independent or semi-independent principalities for themselves, usually found a place among the thirty-six clans of the Rājputs, who now take the place of the Kshatriya families of olden times. Among the new Rājput clans, the Huns and the Pratihāras or Parihars deserve special mention. According to the view generally held by scholars, the Pratihāras belonged to the race of the Gurjaras who came into prominence for the first time in the sixth century A.D. While the ruling families of foreign immigrants and Hinduised border tribes often ranked as Rājputs, the rank and file came under less exalted social groups like the Gujars, the Dhaki Khasiyas, the Bhotiyas and others.

People belonging to the higher castes in the Madhya-deśa (Mid-India) did not, according to the testimony of Fa Hien, "kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic". Sharply distinguished from them were the Chāṇḍālas, who lived apart from others. When they entered the gate of a city or a market-place they struck a piece of wood to make themselves known so that men knew and avoided them, and did not come into contact with them. The existence of impure castes is vouched for, not only by Indian and Chinese records, but by al-Biruni. If the last-mentioned scholar is to be believed, the doctrine of impurity was extended to foreigners in the north-west towards the end of our period. The Hindus of several provinces in the interior, however, did not share the views of their brethren about whom al-Biruni wrote.

The position of women in our period presents certain interesting features. Women of the upper classes in certain areas took a prominent share in administration. The queen-consort clearly occupied an important position in the Gupta period. In succeeding ages we have clear and unequivocal testimony to the existence of queens-regnant in Kāshmir, Orissa and the Andhra country. A Chinese author represents an Indian princess as administering the government in conjunction with her brother. In some of the provinces, notably in the Kanarese country, women acted as provincial governors and heads of villages. The seclusion of women was not generally observed in these regions. Some of the royal ladies in the Deccan are referred to in contemporary epigraphs as not only skilled in music and dancing but also displaying their proficiency in the arts in public. Princess Rājyaśrī, in Northern India, is represented as sitting behind her royal brother and listening to the exposition of the doctrine of the Great Vehicle by the Chinese Master of the Law. These facts not only suggest that

absolute seclusion of women was unknown in certain families, but that girls, at least of the upper classes, received a liberal education and took a keen interest in the cultural activities of the age. The practice of *Svayamvara*, or self-choice of husband, had also not gone out of use. There was, however, another side to the picture. Polygamy was widely prevalent, but women were not ordinarily allowed to contract a second marriage. The custom of burning widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands was coming into general use, at least among the ruling clans.

State of the Country and the General Condition of the People

We have interesting glimpses of the state of the country and the condition of the people during the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods, thanks to the accounts left by a number of Chinese and Muslim observers. The information derived from this source is supplemented by the testimony of contemporary epigraphs. Referring to the "Middle Kingdom", roughly corresponding to the upper Ganges valley, Fa Hien, the earliest of the Chinese pilgrims whose records have come down to us, and who paid a visit to this country in the days of Chandra Gupta II, observes: "The people are numerous and happy. They have not to register their households, or attend to any magistrates and their rules. The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishments. People of various sects set up houses of charity where rooms, couches, beds, food and drink are supplied to travellers." South Bihār, in particular, was noted for the wealth and prosperity of its cities and the benevolence and the righteousness of its people. The elders and the gentry of the locality established houses for dispensing charity and medicines. All the poor and destitute in the country, and all who were diseased, went to these houses and were provided with every kind of help. Doctors examined their diseases. In the city of Pāṭaliputra there were two large and beautiful monasteries to which students and inquirers flocked from all quarters to investigate the principles of duty to one's neighbours.

More than two centuries later, when Hiuen Tsang came to this country, vast stretches of territory, notably in the Swāt valley and in Eastern India, once prosperous, now wore an appearance of desolation. Splendid edifices that had adorned them were now in ruins. But with these exceptions the country in general enjoyed the benefits of good government. Taxes were light and the people were not subject to an arbitrary tyranny. Forced service, though not unknown, was sparingly used and labour was usually paid.

Traces of slavery are, however, found up to the end of our period. The roads and river-routes were less safe than in the Gupta period. The criminal code had become more sanguinary. Liberal provision was still made for education and charitable institutions. The great educational establishments in Pāṭaliputra were no longer in existence as the city itself was in ruins. A great seat of learning had, however, sprung up at Nālandā. "In the establishment were some thousands of brethren, all men of great ability and learning. They were looked up to as models by all India. Foreign students came to the establishment to put an end to their doubts, and then became celebrated." Another great centre of culture was Valabhī in Western India. These two places, Nālandā and Valabhī, are compared by Hiuen Tsang to the most famous educational institutions of China. We are told that "eminent and accomplished men assembled there in crowds, discussed possible and impossible doctrines, and after having been assured of the excellence of their opinions by wise men, became far famed for their wisdom."

Other centres of learning sprang up in subsequent ages. The names of the first two sovereigns of the Pāla dynasty are associated with the famous establishments of Uddanāpura (Bihār) and Vikramāśila. Bhoja, the versatile ruler of Mālwa, established a Sanskrit college at Dhārā. During the reign of Siṅghana, the Yādava king of Devagiri in the Deccan, a College of astronomy was founded by a grandson of Bhāskarāchārya. In the far south, Pallava kings extended their patronage to educational institutions at Kāñchi and Bāhur. The last-mentioned place was situated near Pondicherry and had a College where provision was made for the study of the Vedas, Vedāṅgas, Mimāṃsā, Nyāya, Purāṇas and Dharmaśāstras (ninth century A.D.).

Hiuen Tsang has some interesting observations to make regarding the dress and manners of the people of this country. Their inner clothing and outward attire had no tailoring. As to colour, a fresh white was esteemed. The men wound a strip of cloth round the waist and up to the armpits and left the right shoulder bare. The women wore a long robe which covered both shoulders and fell down loose. The hair of the crown of the head was made into a coil, all the rest of the hair hanging down. Garlands were worn on the head and necklaces on the body. In the far north of India, where the climate was cold, closely-fitting jackets were worn, somewhat like those of the Tartars.

Regarding the character of the people, the pilgrim observes that they were of hasty and irresolute temperament but of pure moral principles. They would not take anything wrongfully, and

they yielded more than fairness required. They did not practise deceit, and they kept their sworn obligations.

The country was famous for its vegetable and mineral wealth. Onions and garlic were little used, and people who ate them were ostracised. Milk, ghee, granulated sugar, sugar candy, cakes and parched grain with mustard seed oil were the common food. Fish, mutton and venison were occasional dainties. The flesh of oxen and some other animals was forbidden. Household utensils were mostly earthenware, few being of brass. The use of copper spoons by the sick is also mentioned. Gold and silver were abundant and were largely used for purposes of coinage. Besides gold and silver coins, cowries and small pearls were also used as media of exchange. Precious substances of various kinds from the sea-ports were bartered for merchandise.

Certain South Indian records throw light on the standard of living of the common people in the days of Chola supremacy. It has been inferred that the average income of a family per month was about rupees sixteen for a member of the upper classes and rupees eight for a member of the lower orders.

Religion

The Gupta age is usually regarded as an era of Brāhmanic revival. There can be no doubt that Brāhmanism enjoyed imperial patronage. Some of the rulers make a pointed claim to have revived orthodox rites that had been in abeyance for a long period. But the claim need not be taken too literally. It has been rightly pointed out by a shrewd observer that the period of the Guptas is one of culmination, of florescence rather than of renaissance. The recrudescence of Brāhmanism in the Ganges valley is as old as the time of Pushyamitra, while in the south we have a long succession of dynasties that counted it as their proud boast to have repeatedly performed Vedic rites like the *Vājapeya* and the *Āśvamedha*. Some of the ablest among the foreign potentates and statesmen of the north, who dominated the stage of Indian history during the period that supervened between the age of the Śuṅgas and that of the Guptas, were the adherents of two great Hindu sects, namely, Śaivas and Bhāgavatas or Vaiṣṇavas, if not of the Vedic sacrificial religion itself.

The most noticeable features in the religious life of the people during the Gupta age were the growing importance of *Bhakti* (loving faith in God) and the love of fellow-beings which found expression in benevolent activities and toleration of the opinions of others.

employment by Vaishṇava kings of Śaivite and Buddhist officials and the affection felt by Jainas for Brāhmaṇas and by Brāhmaṇas for the Tirthaṅkaras and the Buddha. Fa Hien testifies to the benevolence and righteousness of the people of the Ganges valley, who not only directed their attention to the ceremonial side of religion, e.g. the celebration of processions of images, but also to the practice of charity. He remarks that "throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic. The only exception is that of the Chāṇḍālas."

A list of the important religious sects that flourished at the close of the Gupta age is given in Bāṇa's *Harsha-charita*. We find mention in that work of Jainas, both Digambaras (sky-clad, that is naked) and Śvetāmbaras (white-robed), Vaishṇavas, both Bhāgavatas and Pañcharātras, Saugatas or Buddhists, Maṣkarins, possibly identical with the Ājīvikas, and adherents of various schools of philosophy including the Sāṅkhya, the Lokāyatika, the Vaiśeṣika, the Vedānta, and the Nyāya.

Buddhism had powerful exponents during the Gupta age in the famous sages and philosophers Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Kumārajīva and Dignāga. In the succeeding centuries it gradually lost ground. The Hun invasions must have led to the destruction of numerous monastic establishments in the north-west as well as in the east of India. With the deification of the Buddha and his admission into the Viṣṇuite pantheon as an incarnation of Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu, there was little to distinguish the Buddhist laity from their Brāhmaṇical neighbours. Intermarriages between Buddhists and Śaiva or Vaishṇava royal families illustrate the absorption and assimilation of the votaries of the reforming cult by the followers of more orthodox creeds. Brāhmaṇa councillors begin to figure as prominently in Buddhist courts as in the darbars of Brāhmaṇical princes. The growth of Tantricism made the distinction between the Vajrayāna type of Buddhism and certain forms of Śaivism and Śāktism purely nominal. The advent of saintly poets and zealous reformers who sang the praise of Viṣṇu and Śiva and vigorously combated the heretical doctrines of the Great Vehicle must have weighted the scale in favour of Orthodox Hinduism. With the destruction of the last remnants of the great Buddhist establishments that once covered the entire face of Hindustān by a new race of conquerors in the twelfth and succeeding centuries, Buddhism almost vanished from the land of its birth.

Jainism seems to have enjoyed popularity for a long time in Bengal, certain regions in the United Provinces and the Kanarese

country in South India. Hiuen Tsang found the religion flourishing in Bengal in the seventh century. But it was in Western India that it had its most important stronghold. The canon of the white-robed Jainas was reduced to writing in the fifth or sixth century A.D. as a result of the deliberations of a council held at Valabhī in Western India. The Digambara sect attained eminence during the rule of the Chālukyas of Vātāpi and the Rāshtrakūṭas of Malkhed. The Chālukya king, Vinayāditya (A.D. 680–696), had for his spiritual adviser a famous teacher of the Digambaras. Amoghavarsha (A.D. 815–877), one of the greatest of the Rāshtrakūṭas, liberally patronised the sect. Jainism also received the homage of Bijjala Kalachurya of Kalyāṇa (1156–1167) and of Kumārapāla Chaulukya of Anhilvara (1143–1172). The last-mentioned monarch was a patron of the famous Jaina Āchārya Hemachandra. To Vimala, Vastupāla, Tejahpāla, ministers of Gujarāt, we owe some of the splendid shrines at Abu, Girnār, Śatrunjaya and other places.

Both Jainism and Buddhism had eventually to yield the palm to the more orthodox forms of Hinduism in most of the provinces where they had once enjoyed popularity and prosperity. Brāhmanism had gained ascendancy in the Madhya-deśa since the days of Pushyamitra. It enjoyed the almost uninterrupted patronage of the imperial power in that region since the days of the Imperial Guptas. Even Harsha, who had a genuine admiration for Buddhism, is described in official records as a devotee of Maheśvara, that is Śiva. Many of the princes, specially in Mid-India, strove to restore the social order and discipline enjoined in Brāhmanical scriptures. The heterodox faiths no doubt continued in some of the outlying provinces, thanks to the patronage of the Pālas, the Karas of Orissa and the Western Gaṅgas of Mysore, but the religion of the Vedas and Purāṇas triumphed in the end in Bengal under the Senas, in Orissa under the Eastern Gaṅgas and in the far south under the later Tamil kings and the Hoysalas. Traces of Buddhism are found in the Deccan as late as the time of Vikramāditya VI, while the prestige of Jainism remained undimmed till the days of Bijjala. It was the rise of the Śrī Vaishṇava sect under Rāmānuja and the Lingāyat or Vīra Śaiva sect under Basava that turned the scale definitely in favour of the votaries of Viṣṇu and Śiva. Both these great apostles had their precursors.

Śiva Worship

The worship of Śiva found favour with many of the highest officials during the early Gupta age. Pāśupata or Śaiva āchāryas

are constantly mentioned in contemporary records of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. These include not only inscriptions but literary works like those of Varāhamihira, Bāṇa, Mahendravarman Pallava and Hiuen Tsang. In the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. Śaivism seems to have replaced Vaiṣṇavism as the imperial religion of Northern India. It counted among its votaries supreme rulers, foreign as well as indigenous, such as Mihiragula, Yaśodharman, Śaśāṅka and Harsha. Among renowned Pāśupata *āchāryas* of the age was the famous Udyotakara, the writer of a gloss on Vātsyāyana's commentary on the *Nyāya Sūtras*. In the eighth century the country of Kerala on the Mālābar coast produced a teacher who, though not an adherent of any form of sectarian Śaivism, did much to popularise devotion to Śiva among the teeming millions of India. This was the famous Śaṅkarāchārya, one of the greatest Hindu philosophers and teachers of the post-Gupta period. Śaṅkara came of a Brāhmaṇa family of Kaladi. He was an ardent Vedāntist and the most powerful exponent of the doctrine of pure monism (*advaita*) which he elucidated in his commentaries on the classical Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Brahma Sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa. He was not only a great thinker but an able organiser. Among the most durable monuments of his organising zeal are the famous monasteries at Śringeri in Mysore, Dwārakā in Kāthiāwār, Puri in Orissa and Badrināth on the snowy heights of the Himālayas. He died at a comparatively early age, and his memory is held in affectionate reverence by millions of Hindus throughout India.

The province of Kāshmir in the far north of India produced in the ninth and succeeding centuries a number of teachers who are reckoned among the greatest exponents of the Śaiva doctrine and philosophy. No less important than the Kāshmir school of Śaivas were the Tamil and Kanarese saints and scholars known as the *Nāyanārs* and *Vīra Śaivas* respectively. Foremost among the Tamil Śaiva saints were Tirujñāna-Sambandar, Appar, Sundaramūrti and Māṇikka Vāsagar. Kanarese Śaivism found a champion in the famous Basava, who has already been mentioned above. Basava was a minister of the Jaina king, Bijjala of the Kalachurya dynasty of Kalyāṇa, who lived in the middle of the twelfth century A.D. A distinguishing feature of the Vīra Śaiva sect of Karnaṭa to which Basava belonged was its zeal for social reform and special solicitude for the emancipation of women from the thralldom of rigid custom.

The Vaishṇava Movement

Āchāryas devoted to the cult of Vishnu figure prominently in inscriptions of the early Gupta period. The Gupta emperors themselves were votaries of Vishṇu. Bāṇa mentions two important Vaishṇava sects, namely the Bhāgavatas and the Pañcharātras, perhaps worshippers of Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa respectively. Some of the early Chālukya kings of Vātāpi professed Bhāgavatism and the famous bas-reliefs at Bādāmi testify to the popularity of the cult in the Deccan in the sixth century A.D. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* refers to South India, particularly the Tamil country, as a special resort of devotees of Vishṇu. The earliest among the Tamil Vaishṇava saints were the Ālvārs. The most renowned among them seem to have flourished in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. The Ālvārs represented the emotional side of Vaishṇavism, and they were followed by a line of *āchāryas* who represented its intellectual side. Foremost among the *āchāryas* were Nāthamuni, Yāmunāchārya and Rāmānuja. The last-mentioned teacher was the son of a Brāhmaṇa who lived in a village near Madras. Rāmānuja made Kāñchī and Śrīrangam the chief centres of his activities, but the hostility of the Chola government compelled him to seek shelter at the Hoysala court in the Mysore country. He died in the twelfth century A.D. He combated the absolute monism of Śaṅkara and laid emphasis on *Bhakti* as a means of salvation. The school of philosophy that he established was known as *Vīśiṣṭādvaita* or qualified monism. His followers are known as Śrī Vaishṇavas. Many of the great mediaeval reformers of India drew their inspiration from his teachings.

Shortly after Rāmānuja lived Madhva, a famous exponent of the dualistic school of the *Veśānta*.

Vedic Rites

Vedic rites which Samudra Gupta made attempts to revive after a long period of abeyance in certain areas, had their staunch advocates in the *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* or *Karma Mīmāṃsā* school represented by Śavarasvāmin, Prabhākara and Kumārila. Śavara's acquaintance with the Great Vehicle may point to a date later than Nāgārjuna of the Kushān-Sātavāhana period. Prabhākara is later than Śavara but earlier than Kumārila, who is probably an elder contemporary of Śaṅkara. In spite of the teaching of the *Mīmāṃsakas*, the *Karma mārga*, or the way of deliverance by the performance

of Vedic rites, does not seem to have attained amongst the masses of the Hindus the same popularity as the *Bhakti mārga* professed by the ardent sectaries devoted to the cults of Śiva, Viṣṇu and associated deities. It is significant that the ancient rite of *Aśvamedha* tends to fall into disuse after the age of the Guptas and the early Chālukyas.

Literary Activity

Bühler observed long ago that during the Gupta age court poetry was zealously cultivated in India. Samudra Gupta took delight in the title of *Kavirāja* or king of poets. He associated with learned people and is said to have put an end to the war between good poetry and prosperity. There can hardly be any doubt that many poets who were none too wealthy received his patronage. The most notable poet of his court was Harishena, the writer of the Allahābād panegyric. Chandra Gupta II, Vikramāditya, son of Samudra Gupta, followed in the footsteps of his father, and counted among his high ministers a poet named Virasena-Śāba. Tradition associates the name of Kālidāsa, the greatest of Sanskrit poets after the immortal writers of the two ancient epics, with king Vikramāditya and the *āchārya* Dignāga, who probably flourished during this time. The fame of Kālidāsa and Bhāravi is well attested by Bāṇa and Ravikīrti who adorned the courts of Harsha and of Pulakeśin II respectively. The rulers of Valabhi extended their patronage to the famous author of the *Bhaṭṭi-kāvya*. To the Gupta period have also been assigned the celebrated dramatists who wrote the *Mṛichchhakatika*, the *Mudrā Rākshasa* and the *Devī Chandra Guptam*, but the matter is not free from doubt. The seventh century A.D. saw the composition of the works of Bāṇa, Mayūra, Bhartrihari, Subandhu and the royal poets, Śrī Harsha and Mahendravarman. The portions of the *Purāṇas* dealing with the so-called future kings were apparently compiled during the Gupta age, and it is probable that the *Mahābhārata* received its latest accretions during the same epoch. In the domain of science the Gupta period produced the celebrated astronomers, Āryabhaṭa and Varāhamihira. Even before Varāhamihira's time Indians had invented the decimal notation. The law-books of Nārada and Bṛihaspati are also reckoned by several scholars as products of the same age.

In the post-Gupta period we have in addition to male writers a number of poetesses, among whom Śīlabhaṭṭārikā deserves special mention. The *Kaumudī mahotsava* is also ascribed by some scholars

to a female dramatist, but her identity and date are uncertain. Among writers of the opposite sex, Bhavabhūti stands pre-eminent. Both he and Vākpatirāja enjoyed the patronage of Yaśovarman of Kanauj. Towards the end of the ninth century the court of Kanauj was adorned by Rājaśekhara.

Epic poetry and the drama in the period after the Great Guptas did not always reach the level of Bhāravi and Bhavabhūti. But the later age still produced poets and playwrights of ability like Māgha, Śrī Harsha, Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa, Kshemiśvara, and Kṛishṇa Miśra. Lyric poetry flourished long after Bhaṭṭihari, and the twelfth century saw the composition by Jayadeva of the *Gīta Govinda*, one of the sweetest of the Sanskrit song-books. Works of merit continued to be produced in other fields of learning and literature. The prose romance of Daṇḍin, the later versions of the didactic fables of the *Pañchatantra*, the ethical compositions of Śāntideva and treatises on polity written by Kāmandaka and Somadeva may be mentioned in this connection. In one domain, that of historical literature, the post-Gupta period produced works the like of which had not been seen in earlier ages. The most notable among them were the *Harsha-charita* of Bāṇa, the *Rāma-charita* of Sandhyākara, the *Vikramānka-charita* of Bilhana and the *Rājataranginī* of Kalhana. Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and other eminent philosophers of the epoch under review do not suffer by comparison with the great masters of the days of Kanishka and the Sātavāhanas. In astronomy, the period of Yādava rule produced the great Bhāskara. We have towards the close of the age under review a number of polymaths like Bhoja of Dhārā, Someśvara III of Kalyāṇa and Kshemendra of Kāshmir who showed their interest in such diverse subjects as poetry, rhetoric, polity, philosophy, astronomy, architecture, medicine, alchemy, music and painting.

CHAPTER XV

COLONIAL AND CULTURAL EXPANSION

FROM time immemorial the people of India had free and intimate intercourse with the outside world. Even in the dim pre-historic age, the Neolithic people, as we have seen above, had relations with the Far East, and there are good reasons to believe that they emigrated in large numbers, both by land and sea, and settled in Indo-China and the Indian Archipelago. In the succeeding age, while a high degree of civilisation flourished in the Indus valley, there was undoubtedly a familiar intercourse with the countries of Western and Central Asia. Of the two important races that moulded Indian civilisation, the Aryans apparently, and the Dravidians possibly, came to India from outside, and necessarily relations were established and maintained, at least for some time, with the countries where they had lived before the occupation of India. It would, therefore, be reasonable to assume that India as a whole had never led an isolated life completely cut off from the rest of the world.

The intercourse between India and the countries by which she was surrounded on the north, east and west was maintained during the historical period. In the west, there were trade relations with Babylonia, and also with Syria and Egypt. So far as the most ancient periods are concerned, we have to rely upon indirect evidence, such as the discovery of Indian articles in those lands or the use of Indian names for these articles. From the Maurya period we possess more definite evidence. But the most detailed account that we possess of this trade belongs to the first century A.D. Towards the latter half of this century a Greek sailor, living in Egypt, undertook a voyage to India along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea, and recorded a minute account of his experiences in a book called *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. We learn from this book that there was active trade between India and the western countries. There were important harbours on the coast such as Barbarike, Barygaza, Muziris, Nelcynda, Bakarai, Korkai, and Puhar, and ships built and fitted up by Indians sailed from these ports with their merchandise which consisted, among other

things, of pearls, precious stones, spices, unguents, and fine cotton cloths called muslins, all of which were in great demand in western countries.

These goods were carried to the harbours on the sea-coast from inland cities by a network of roads. We learn from the same book that Indians settled in some islands of the Arabian Sea for purposes of trade, and the island of Socotra had a colony of Indian merchants.

The account of the *Periplus* is supplemented by later writers. Pliny, for example, complains that for the purchase of luxurious articles Rome pays every year a million sesterces to India. The statement of Pliny is corroborated by the actual discovery of a large number of Roman coins in India which must have been paid for the Indian goods and carried here by way of trade.

It is further proved by the Indian missions sent to Roman emperors. The king of Pāṇḍya sent a mission to Augustus in or about 26 B.C. In later periods we hear of seven missions to Roman emperors. The trade with Rome and other western countries was carried through the important port of Alexandria where goods, carried by sea up to the Red Sea coast, were transported either by land, or by small boats through canals of the Nile. There was also a land-route from India to the Mediterranean coast which ran through Persia and along the shores of the Caspian, to Syria and Asia Minor. This route had become familiar after the invasion of Alexander the Great. During the early centuries of the Christian era, Palmyra (in Syria) was one of the principal centres of this trade.

Both the sea and land routes came under the control of the Arabs when they rose to power in the seventh century A.D. Henceforth the Arabs carried on an active trade with India and we have interesting records of it in the chronicles of the Arab merchants.

It is a well-known fact that culture and civilisation follow in the wake of trade and commerce. We find accordingly that the Indian religion spread to the western countries. Aśoka sent Buddhist missionaries to western Asia, northern Africa and south-eastern Europe, and claimed that the tenets of that religion were welcomed in these regions. We have no means of ascertaining the truth of this from independent evidence, but there is no doubt that even long after Aśoka people in Alexandria showed interest in Buddhism, and that both Buddhist and Brāhmanical religion were widely prevalent in several countries of western Asia before the advent of Islam. The knowledge of Indian philosophy and literature in the West is also an undoubted fact. There is, however, equally little doubt that Western culture also flowed to India. The knowledge of Greek and

Roman astronomy and Greek influence on the art and coinage of India are undisputed facts. The Arabs imbibed a great deal of Indian culture, and carried it, along with Indian merchandise, to the western countries. Indian medicine and the wonderful invention of the decimal notation in Arithmetic, among others, became through the Arabs the universal property of the world.

In Central Asia the cultural conquest almost completely overshadows the trade relations of India. Here, partly by missionary propaganda, and partly by the political influence of the Kushāns, Buddhism became almost the universal religion of the nomadic peoples that settled in the vast region between the shores of the Caspian and the Wall of China. Indians also settled in large numbers in the region round modern Khotan. The physical aspects of this region have changed so completely that it is now difficult to imagine that flourishing Indian colonies once dotted the area which now lies buried under the sands of the Taklamakan desert. Yet the archaeological explorations of Sir Aurel Stein and many others in this inhospitable tract have laid bare the ruins of numerous Buddhist *stūpas* and monasteries, the images of Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical gods, and many manuscripts and shorter records written in Indian languages and Indian alphabets. Sir Aurel Stein has remarked that whilst he moved in these excavated areas under the ground he could have believed himself to be in the familiar surroundings of an ancient Indian city in the Punjab, so complete was the Indianisation of these out-of-the-way colonies. Even as late as the seventh century A.D., when Hiuen Tsang passed through Central Asia on his way to and back from India, he noted the dominance of Buddhism and Indian culture over this wide area. It is believed that Chingīz Khān, the great Mongol leader of the thirteenth century, professed some form of Buddhism.

From Central Asia Buddhism spread to China and there it remains a living faith, even to-day, among her untold millions. It is difficult to exaggerate the influence which Buddhism and Indian culture exerted upon the ancient civilisation of China. She showed the proverbial zeal of the new convert. Bands of Chinese monks undertook the perilous journey to India, both by land and sea, in order to study at first hand the religious beliefs and practices of Indian Buddhists and to collect Buddhist books and images. Hundreds and thousands of Buddhist books were carried from India to China and then translated into Chinese. For this purpose not only did the Chinese themselves learn Sanskrit and Pāli, but they also invited Indian Pandits to go to China and collaborate with them in the arduous task of translating the sacred scriptures

of Buddhism. Hundreds of Indian scholars settled in China and dedicated their lives to the pious task. It is singular to note that there are Chinese translations of Buddhist texts whose originals can no longer be traced in India. In addition to this intimate contact established by religion, we have to take note of the political and commercial relations between India and China, and the existence of a fairly regular traffic by way of the sea.

From China, Buddhism spread to Korea, and from Korea to Japan. Buddhism is still a living faith in both these countries, and has moulded their civilisation during the last fifteen hundred years.

Tibet forms a narrow enclave between India and these northern countries. It was not, however, such an exclusive and isolated region as it is to-day, and a regular route from China to Nepāl passed through it. Tibet became a powerful kingdom in the seventh century A.D., and Srong-tsan Gampo, one of its best-known kings (seventh century A.D.), introduced Buddhism into his country. He had married a princess from China and another from Nepāl, and presumably the influence of his queens converted him to the new faith. Along with the new religion, he introduced Indian alphabets and thus was paved the way for a new culture and civilisation in Tibet. As in the case of China, Tibetan Buddhists came to India in large numbers, and the proximity of India enabled them to come into closer contact with the home of Buddhism. The Pāla emperors helped towards the reform of Buddhism in Tibet, and there was a lively intercourse between Tibet and the Pāla kingdom. Tibetan monks studied at the monasteries of Nālandā and Vikramaśīla, and many Indian Buddhist monks visited Tibet. The name of Atisa Dīpaṃkara, a monk of Eastern Bengal, who visited Tibet in the eleventh century A.D. in the days of Nayapāla, is still held in the highest veneration there. Hundreds of the sacred texts of Buddhism were translated into Tibetan, of which two famous collections, *Tanjur* and *Kanjur*, still exist.

The spirit of maritime adventure in India found its full and free scope in the south-east. Across the Bay of Bengal lay Indo-China and the Malay Archipelago. They were peopled by primitive races, and held almost a monopoly of the world's spice trade. These fertile tracts were also rich in minerals and soon drew the attention of the Indians. The eastern coast of India, from the mouth of the Ganges to Cape Comorin, was studded with ports, some of which are named in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*. The author of this book refers to some of the Far Eastern countries as Chryse, or the Golden Land. He implies, though he does not expressly state,

that there was a coasting voyage from Bengal to those regions. Ptolemy, in the second century A.D., knew the names of important trading centres in the Malay Peninsula and the islands of Java and Sumatra. Buddhist texts, written about the same period, give a long list of trading centres in the Far East which agrees fairly well with that of Ptolemy. These names are mostly in Sanskrit. There is thus no doubt that by the second century A.D. Indians had developed important trading relations with the Far East. We learn from Ptolemy that there was a direct route from Palura (not far from Chicacole and Gañjām) across the sea to the Malay Peninsula.

Indian literature has faithfully preserved the traditions of the early days of this perilous voyage to unknown lands beyond the sea. The stories preserved in the *Jātakas*, the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and other similar collections frequently refer to traders' voyages to Suvarṇabhūmi—the land of gold, which was a general designation of several lands in the Far East. Traders returned with immense riches from the land whose very soil was supposed to be made of gold. On the other hand, many met with shipwreck and there were also sufferings and miseries of other kinds. Some stories represent young Kshatriya princes, dispossessed of their hereditary kingdoms, sailing to Suvarṇabhūmi to restore their fortunes.

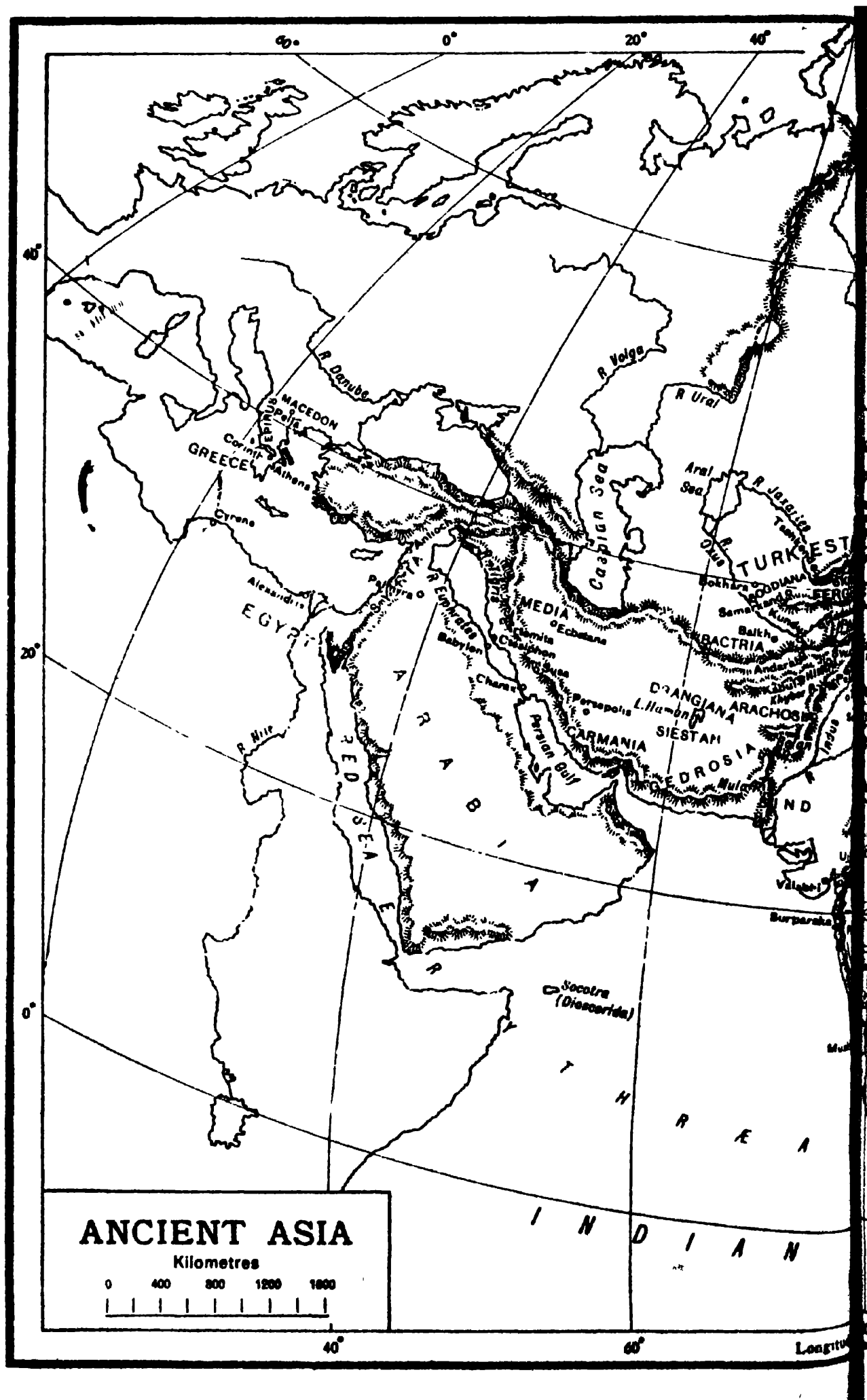
To some such Kshatriya enterprise we perhaps owe the foundation of Indian political power in these far-off regions. From the second century A.D. onwards we find reference to kingdoms ruled by persons with Indian names. Their religion, social manners and customs, language and alphabet are all Indian and we may therefore regard these States as Indian colonial kingdoms. Between the second and fifth centuries A.D. such kingdoms were established in the Malay Peninsula, Cambodia, Annam, and the islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali and Borneo. The history of these kingdoms is known, partly from the Sanskrit inscriptions found in those countries, and partly from the accounts preserved by the Chinese. The Brāhmaṇical religion, mainly Śaivism, flourished in these regions, though Buddhism was also not unknown. The indigenous people adopted the civilisation of their masters and there was a gradual fusion between the two races. Hindu customs and manners were no doubt modified to some extent by coming into contact with these people, but still for nearly a thousand years the essential features of Indian civilisation were the dominant characteristics of society in these regions.

The Indian colonists established great kingdoms, some of which lasted for more than a thousand years and continued to flourish

even long after the end of Hindu rule in India. On the mainland of Indo-China there were two powerful kingdoms, those of Champā and Kambuja. The kingdom of Champā comprised, at its greatest extent, nearly the whole of modern Vietnam (Annam). Some of its kings such as Jaya Parameśvaravarmadeva Īśvaramūrti (c. 1050–1060), Rudravarman (c. 1061–1069), Harivarman (1070–1081), Mahārājādhirāja Śrī Jaya Indravarman (c. A.D. 1167–1180), Jaya Simhavarman (c. 1257–1287), were great heroes and defended their country successfully against the attacks of their western neighbours, the Kambujas, and the great Mongol chief, Kublai Khān. They had diplomatic relations with the Chinese. After a glorious existence of more than thirteen hundred years (c. A.D. 150–1471) their power was virtually broken by the repeated attacks of their northern neighbours, the Annamese, and in the sixteenth century the Hindu kingdom was overrun by these Mongolian hordes. There were many flourishing cities in Champā, and the whole country was adorned with beautiful temples, both Hindu and Buddhist.

The origin of the Hindu kingdom of Kambuja is shrouded in mystery. According to an old legend, Kauṇḍinya married Somā, a Naga princess, and founded the royal dynasty of Kambuja. He planted a spear which he had obtained from Droṇa's son Aśvatthāmā. Another version makes the hero a son of Ādityavaṃsa, king of Indraprastha. In any case, we can trace the earliest Hindu kingdom in Kambuja to the first or second century A.D. It occupied the southern part of Cambodia and was called Fu-nan by the Chinese. It rose to great power, and exercised suzerainty over several vassal states. On its southern frontier was the vassal kingdom of Tuen-sien. A Chinese author writes about this kingdom as follows: "More than a thousand Brāhmaṇas from India reside there. The people follow their doctrines and give them their daughters in marriage. They read their sacred books day and night." The kings of Fu-nan sent ambassadors to both India and China.

The position of supremacy passed in the sixth century to Kambuja-deśa, originally one of the vassal states of Fu-nan. Kambuja-deśa, at first only a small principality in the north-east, has given its name to the whole country, and its kings ruled in great splendour for nine hundred years. Among its most valiant kings may be named Jayavarman I, II, and VII, Yaśovarman, and Sūryavarman II. In the fifteenth century A.D. the invasions of the Annamites from the east and the Thais (who had conquered Siam) from the west reduced the powerful kingdom to a petty principality which became the protectorate of the French, and is now again an independent State.





The kingdom of Kambuja rose to far greater power than Chāmpā. In addition to the whole of modern Cambodia, Cochin-China, Laos, Siam and parts of Burma and the Malay Peninsula were included within the Kambuja empire at its greatest extent. Numerous Sanskrit inscriptions give us the detailed history of their kings, and wonderful temples like Angkor Vat, those of Angkor Thom and a hundred others still tell the tale of their grandeur and magnificence.

Angkor Vat is, in every sense, a wonder of the world. It is a shrine originally dedicated to Vishnu, and stands on the top of a terraced structure. Each terrace forms a sort of covered gallery, adorned throughout with sculptures, and leads to the next higher one by means of a staircase. There are numerous spires and towers, the eight towers at the four angles of the third and last gallery being each 180 feet high. After ascending the third terrace, we stand in front of the central shrine with its high tower (213 feet above the ground) dominating the entire region. The whole structure is surrounded by a stone enclosure provided with gates and galleries, measuring two-thirds of a mile east to west and half a mile north to south. Outside the enclosure runs a ditch, 700 feet wide. A stone causeway, 36 feet wide, with balustrade, runs over the ditch. It is continued as a broad paved road from the gate of the enclosure right up to the gate of the first terrace, a distance of about two furlongs.

Angkor Thom (Nagaradhāma?) is the modern name of the capital city founded by King Jayavarman VII. The city was square in shape, each side measuring more than two miles. It was surrounded by a moat 330 feet broad and enclosed by a high stone wall. The centre of the city was occupied by the grand temple of Bayon. It is pyramidal in shape and has three stages, adorned with high towers, nearly forty in number. The central tower dominating the whole structure is nearly 150 feet high. Each of these towers has a finely carved human face on four sides, representing the Buddhist deity Avalokiteśvara, or rather king Jayavarman VII. conceived as such. Several other massive structures, both religious and secular, surrounded the temple of Bayon.

The city gates, with towers and guard-houses, were imposing structures. Five avenues, about 100 feet wide, run from the gates to the heart of the city, a distance of a mile. The city was adorned with a large number of tanks with embankments, and a royal terrace about 1,200 feet in length and 13 feet in height with sculptured reliefs of exquisite quality. In short, everything was conceived on a truly noble scale, and it was one of the grandest cities in the whole world in that age.

The Malay Peninsula and the Indian Archipelago saw the rise and fall of two big Hindu empires. The first empire was founded by the Śailendra dynasty in the eighth century A.D. It comprised the Malay Peninsula and nearly the whole of the Archipelago including the islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali and Borneo. The Arab merchants who traded in these parts described in rapturous terms the power, wealth and magnificence of the grand monarch who exercised supreme sway and styled him "Mahārāja". He owned a powerful navy and made successful raids both against Champā and Kambuja. According to the Arab writers, he "was overlord of a large number of islands over a length of 1,000 parsangs or more". Many of these chroniclers tell the story how the Mahārāja every morning threw into a lake a brick made of solid gold. According to the Arab accounts, the Mahārāja was held in high esteem by the rulers of both India and China. Ibn Rosteh, writing about A.D. 903, remarks: "The great king is called Mahārāja, i.e. king of kings. He is not regarded as the greatest among the kings of India because he dwells in the islands. No other king is richer or more powerful than he, and none has more revenue." Ibn Khordadbeh (A.D. 844–848) estimates the daily revenue of the king as two hundred maunds of gold.

The Śailendra kings were followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism and had diplomatic relations with the rulers of China and India. King Bālaputradeva sent an ambassador to the emperor Devapāla of Bengal (p. 158), requesting him to grant five villages to the monastery which he (Bālaputradeva) had built at Nālandā. Devapāla, of course, granted the request. It appears that the Śailendras derived their religious inspiration from Bengal which was then the chief centre of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India. Kumāraghosha, a Buddhist monk of Bengal, became the *guru* or preceptor of the Śailendras, and at his bidding the Śailendra emperor constructed the beautiful temple of Tārā. The Śailendras were great builders and the famous *stūpa* of Barabudur stands to this day as the living monument of their grandeur and magnificence. This noble building, situated on the top of a hill, consists of a series of nine successive terraces, each receding from the one beneath it, and the whole crowned by a bell-shaped *stūpa* at the centre of the topmost terrace. The lowest terrace has an extreme length of 131 yards. The five lower terraces are each enclosed on the inner side by a wall supporting balustrades so as to form four open galleries. The three uppermost terraces are encircled by a ring of *stūpas*, each containing an image of Buddha within a perforated framework. The galleries are covered with sculptures, illustrating scenes from Buddhist texts, and the

balustrades are decorated with small niche-temples containing images of Buddha. The images and sculptures are the finest examples of Indo-Javanese art. When we remember that the structure is nearly 400 feet square and that its successive galleries are full of sculptures and images of Buddha, exhibiting the highest skill and workmanship, we may well understand why Barabudur is referred to as the eighth wonder of the world. The art of Java and Kambuja was no doubt derived from India and fostered by the Indian rulers of these colonies, but Barabudur and Angkor Vat far exceed in grandeur of conception and skill of execution anything that we know of in India itself.

The Śailendras ruled in glory till the eleventh century A.D. when the Cholas cast covetous eyes upon the rich maritime empire. Rājendra Chola I (p. 181) possessed a magnificent fleet and invaded the dominions of the Śailendras. His efforts were successful and he conquered a large part of the Śailendra empire. But it was not an easy task to keep such distant provinces under control. The Śailendras continued the struggle and shook off the Chola supremacy after nearly a century. But soon their power declined and an ill-fated expedition against the island of Ceylon in the thirteenth century brought about the final disruption of the empire.

The decline and downfall of the Śailendras gave an opportunity to an aspiring kingdom in the island of Java to assert its power. A Hindu kingdom had been established in the island as early as the fourth century A.D. but it was conquered by the Śailendras. Java formed a part of the Śailendra empire till the ninth century A.D. when it recovered its independence. The seat of political power was, however, removed from the central part of the island, which was at one time the centre of Śailendra power and contained their famous monuments, including Barabudur. Henceforth Eastern Java, with its seat of power at first at Kediri and then at Singhasari, played the dominant part in politics. Towards the close of the thirteenth century A.D. a new royal dynasty was founded by king Vijaya with the city called Tikta-vilva (bitter *vilva* fruit) or its Javanese equivalent, Majapahit, as its capital. The kingdom of Majapahit conquered the surrounding islands, and by the year A.D. 1365 the empire of Majapahit included nearly the whole of the Malay Peninsula and the Malay Archipelago. Roughly speaking, it comprised the Dutch possessions in the Archipelago in the 19th century with the addition of the Malay Peninsula, but excluding perhaps northern Celebes.

Early in the fifteenth century A.D. a fugitive Hindu chief of Java founded the kingdom of Malacca, which soon rose to be a great political power and an important commercial centre. The conversion of its second king to Islam made Malacca a stronghold of that faith, which soon reacted on neighbouring territories. The new faith penetrated into Java, in the wake of trade and commerce, and even some members of its royal family were converted to it. By a concerted attempt of the votaries of the new faith, the ruler of Majapahit was driven from the throne at the beginning of the sixteenth century. With the fall of the Hindu kingdom of Majapahit, the whole of the island was converted to Islam. But the royal family and a large element of the Hindu population took refuge in the island of Bali, which had been a Hindu colony for nearly a thousand years. With the exception of this island, where Hinduism flourishes even to-day, the rest of the Malay Archipelago, generally speaking, adopted the faith and culture of Islam.

Indian art and literature flourished in Java to an extent unknown elsewhere. There are still hundreds of temples in ruins, and an extensive literature, in manuscripts, based on Sanskrit. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were most popular in that island, and even to-day furnish the theme of their popular shadow-play, called Wajang, and theatrical performances. With the fall of Majapahit, artistic activities came to an end in Java.

We may conclude with a broad survey of the Indian colonies in the Far East. For nearly fifteen hundred years, and down to a period when the Hindus had lost their independence in their own home, Hindu kings were ruling over Indo-China and the numerous islands of the Indian Archipelago, from Sumatra to New Guinea. Indian religion, Indian culture, Indian laws and Indian government moulded the lives of the primitive races all over this wide region, and they imbibed a more elevated moral spirit and a higher intellectual taste through the religion, art and literature of India. In short, the people were lifted to a higher plane of civilisation. A greater India was established by a gentle fusion of races, which richly endowed the original inhabitants with the spiritual heritage of India. So long as Hinduism was in full vigour at home, Hinduism in the colonies was also a vital force, but the downfall of the Hindus in India also led to the decay of their colonial supremacy. The fountain head having dried up, the streams fed by it were also gradually choked, leading to their ultimate disappearance. It is no mere accident that from after A.D. 1100 or 1200 Hinduism had spent its force in the colonies, and the indigenous element

began gradually to assert itself till Islam was firmly planted in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D.

The history of the colonies demonstrates the unsoundness of the popular belief that Hinduism cannot be adopted by foreigners but is meant only for those who are born within its fold. It shows the great vigour with which it could absorb and vitalise foreign culture and could elevate even the most primitive races to a higher sphere of culture and civilisation. If we remember that Indian culture and civilisation played a similar role, though perhaps in a lesser degree, in western, central and eastern Asia, we can realise an aspect of the true greatness of India, not always sufficiently emphasised. The colonial and cultural expansion of India is one of the most brilliant, but forgotten, episodes of Indian history, of which any Indian may justly feel proud.

CHAPTER XVI

MONUMENTS OF ANCIENT INDIA

The Pre-historic Period

IN a previous chapter, reference has been made to the artistic relics of the pre-historic period. They consist, first, of Neolithic implements, and secondly, of seals, buildings, sculptures and implements of copper and bronze found at Mohenjo-Daro and a few other sites.

The most artistic objects at Mohenjo-Daro are no doubt the seal-engravings, portraying animals like the humped bull, the buffalo, the bison, etc. Regarding these, Sir John Marshall observes as follows :

“In no sense can these objects be regarded as products of primitive or archaic art. Small as they are, they demonstrate a thorough comprehension of both work in the round and relief, and exhibit a spontaneity and truthfulness to nature of which even Hellenic art might not have been ashamed.”

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The same author makes the following remarks on two stone statues found at Harappa :

“When I first saw them I found it difficult to believe that they were pre-historic ; they seemed so completely to upset all established ideas about early art. Modelling such as this was unknown in the ancient world up to the Hellenistic age of Greece.”

Maurva Period—the Origin of Art

The earliest ruins of Harappā and Mohenjo-Daro have been assigned to a period not later than 2700 B.C. For more than two thousand years after that we possess no ancient monuments that deserve any serious consideration.

In the historical period, we have ruins of monuments that may be referred to as early a period as 500 B.C. But it is only in the age of Aśoka, the great Maurya emperor, that we come across

monuments of high quality in large number which enable us to form a definite idea about the nature of Indian art.

The finest examples of Aśokan art are furnished by the monolithic pillars (see p. 218) on which his edicts are engraved. Each pillar consists of a shaft or column, made of one piece of stone, supporting a capital made of another single piece of stone. The round and slightly tapering shaft, made of sandstone, is highly polished and very graceful in its proportions. The capital, equally highly polished, consists of one or more animal figures in the round, resting on an abacus engraved with sculptures in relief; and below this is the inverted lotus, which is usually, though perhaps wrongly, called the Persepolitan Bell. A high degree of knowledge of engineering was displayed in cutting these huge blocks of stone and removing them hundreds of miles from the quarry, and sometimes to the top of a hill. Extraordinary technical skill was shown in cutting and chiselling the stone with wonderful accuracy and in imparting the lustrous polish to the whole surface. But these pale into insignificance before the high artistic merits of the figures, which exhibit realistic modelling and movement of a very high order. The capital of the Sārnāth Pillar is undoubtedly the best of the series. The figures of four lions standing back to back, and the smaller figures of animals in relief on the abacus, all show a highly advanced form of art and their remarkable beauty and vigour have elicited the highest praise from all the art-critics of the world. The late Dr. V. A. Smith made the following observation on the Sārnāth capital:

“It would be difficult to find in any country an example of ancient animal sculpture superior or even equal to this beautiful work of art, which successfully combines realistic modelling with ideal dignity and is finished in every detail with perfect accuracy.”

Many other pillars of Aśoka, though inferior to that of Sārnāth, possess remarkable beauty. It may be mentioned in this connection that the jewellery of the Maurya period also exhibits a high degree of technical skill and proficiency.

As compared with sculptures, the architectural remains of the Maurya period are very poor. Contemporary Greek writers refer to magnificent palaces in the capital city of Pāṭaliputra and regard them as the finest and grandest in the whole world. Some seven hundred years later the Mauryan edifices inspired awe and admiration in the heart of the Chinese traveller, Fa Hien. But these noble

buildings have utterly perished. Recent excavations on the site have laid bare their ruins, the most remarkable being those of a hundred-pillared hall.

The extant architectural remains consist, besides a small monolithic stone rail round a *stūpa* at Sārnāth, mainly of the rock-cut Chaitya halls in the Barabar hills and neighbouring localities in the Bihar subdivision of the Patna district. Although excavated in the hardest rock, the walls of these caves are polished like glass.

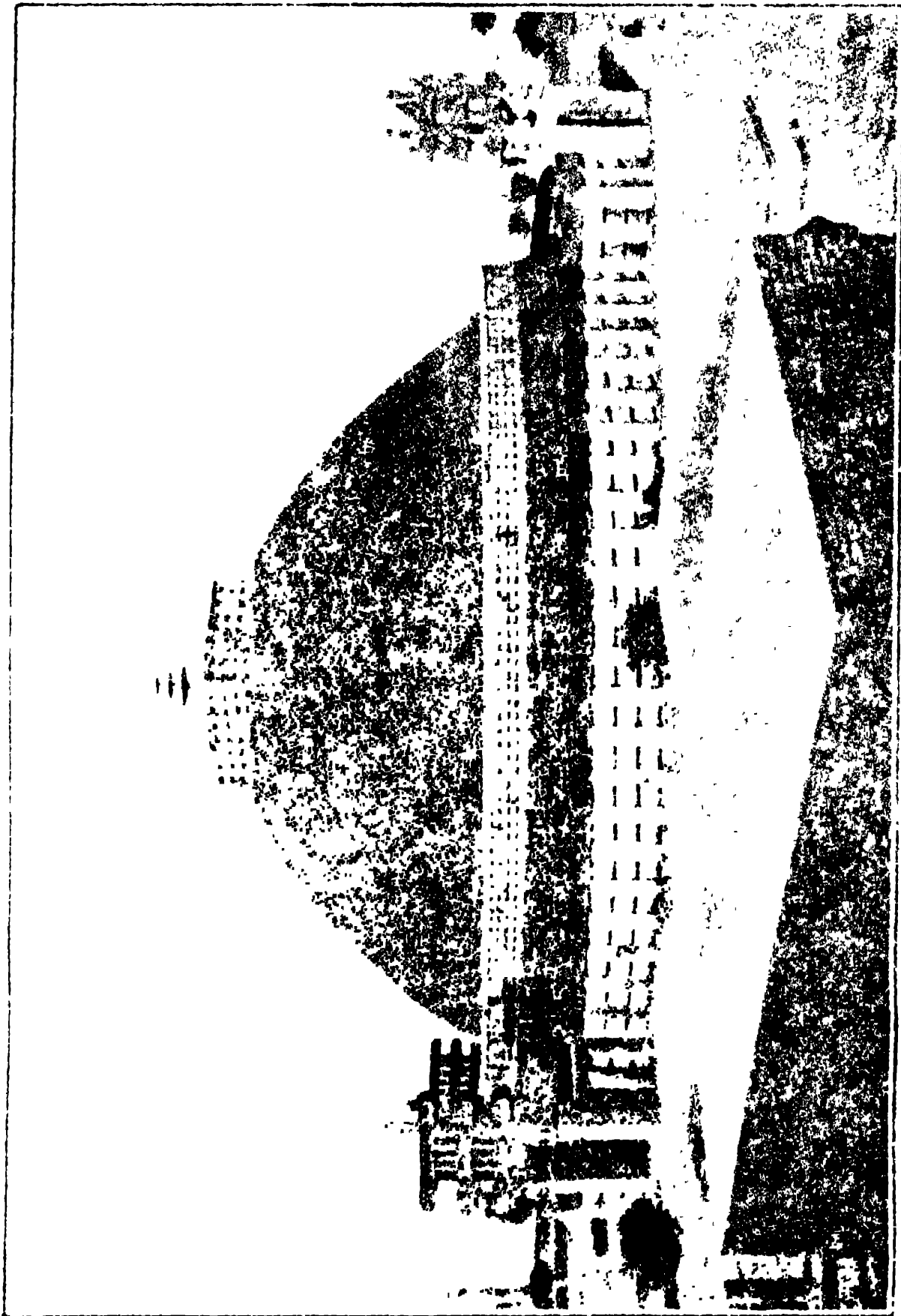
Aśoka also built quite a large number of *stūpas*. The *stūpa* is a solid domical structure of brick or stone, resting on a round base. It was sometimes surrounded by a plain or ornamented stone railing with one or more gateways, which were often of highly elaborate pattern and decorated with sculptures. Tradition credits Aśoka with building 84,000 *stūpas* all over India and Afghānistān but they have almost entirely perished. Some of them, enclosed and enlarged at later times, perhaps still exist, the most famous example being the big *stūpa* at Sāñchī, in Bhopal State, not far from Bhilsa. The diameter of the present *stūpa* is $121\frac{1}{2}$ feet, the height about $77\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and the massive stone railing which encloses it is 11 feet high. According to Sir John Marshall, the original brick *stūpa* built by Aśoka was probably of not more than half the present dimensions, which were subsequently enlarged by the addition of a stone casing faced with concrete. The present railing also replaced the older and smaller one. A similar fate has possibly overtaken many other *stūpas* of Aśoka.

It is quite evident from what has been said above, that Maurya art exhibits in many respects an advanced stage of development in the evolution of Indian art. The artists of Aśoka were by no means novices, and there must have been a long history of artistic effort behind them. How are we then to explain the almost total absence of specimens of Indian art before c. 250 B.C.?

This is the problem which faces us at the very beginning of our study of Indian art—highly finished specimens of art, belonging to such remotely distant periods as 2700 B.C. and 250 B.C., with little to fill up the long intervening gap.

We are not in a position to solve this problem until more data are available. In the meantime we can only consider various possibilities.

First, it is not unlikely that the artistic traditions of the Indus valley continued down to the Maurya period. The absence of specimens has to be explained by the supposition that most of the monuments being made of wood or other perishable materials



have left no trace behind. Rare specimens in stone or other durable materials may yet be unearthed by future excavations. This solution is prompted by the analogous problem of Indian alphabets. The earliest Indian alphabets so far known, and from which all the current Indian alphabets have been derived, are those found in the inscriptions of Aśoka. How they came to be evolved into that finished stage has been a mystery, and attempts have been made to derive them from various types of alphabets in Western Asia. But the numerous seals found at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappā with pictorial writings (in which an alphabet or a syllable is represented by a pictorial illustration of a material object) have induced some scholars to regard these as the origin from which the Brāhmī alphabet of Aśoka has been ultimately derived. In a similar way, the artistic traditions of the Aśokan period might be ultimately traced to those of the Indus valley. But in both cases, the intermediate stages of development or processes of evolution are hidden from us.

Secondly, it is permissible to hold that the art-traditions of the Indus valley were gradually lost and that Mauryan art has an independent history. What that history may be is involved in doubt, and it is possible to entertain two different views on the subject. We may either hold that, in addition to works in wood, the Indian artists of the pre-Maurya period also excelled in works in stone, though these have perished or not yet come to light. Or we may suppose that the Indians first began to work in stone during the Maurya period. The results of their endeavour to change from wood to stone are seen in the crude inferior pillars of Aśoka while those which are excellent and highly finished were the work of foreign artists employed by that great emperor. According to this theory, Indian art continued more or less under this foreign tutelage long after Aśoka, until a full-fledged Indian art was developed under the Imperial Guptas.

From the End of the Maurya Period to the Rise of the Guptas

The five hundred years that intervened between the fall of the Mauryas and the rise of the Gupta empire constitute a distinct period in the evolution of Indian art. So far as we can judge from extant remains, several important schools of sculpture flourished in different localities during this period—at Bhārhut (Nagod and Sāñchi in Madhya Pradesh, Bodh-Gayā in Bihār, Mathurā in U.P., Amarāvati and Nāgārjunikoṇḍa near the mouth of the Kṛishṇā river, and Gandhāra in West Pākistān.

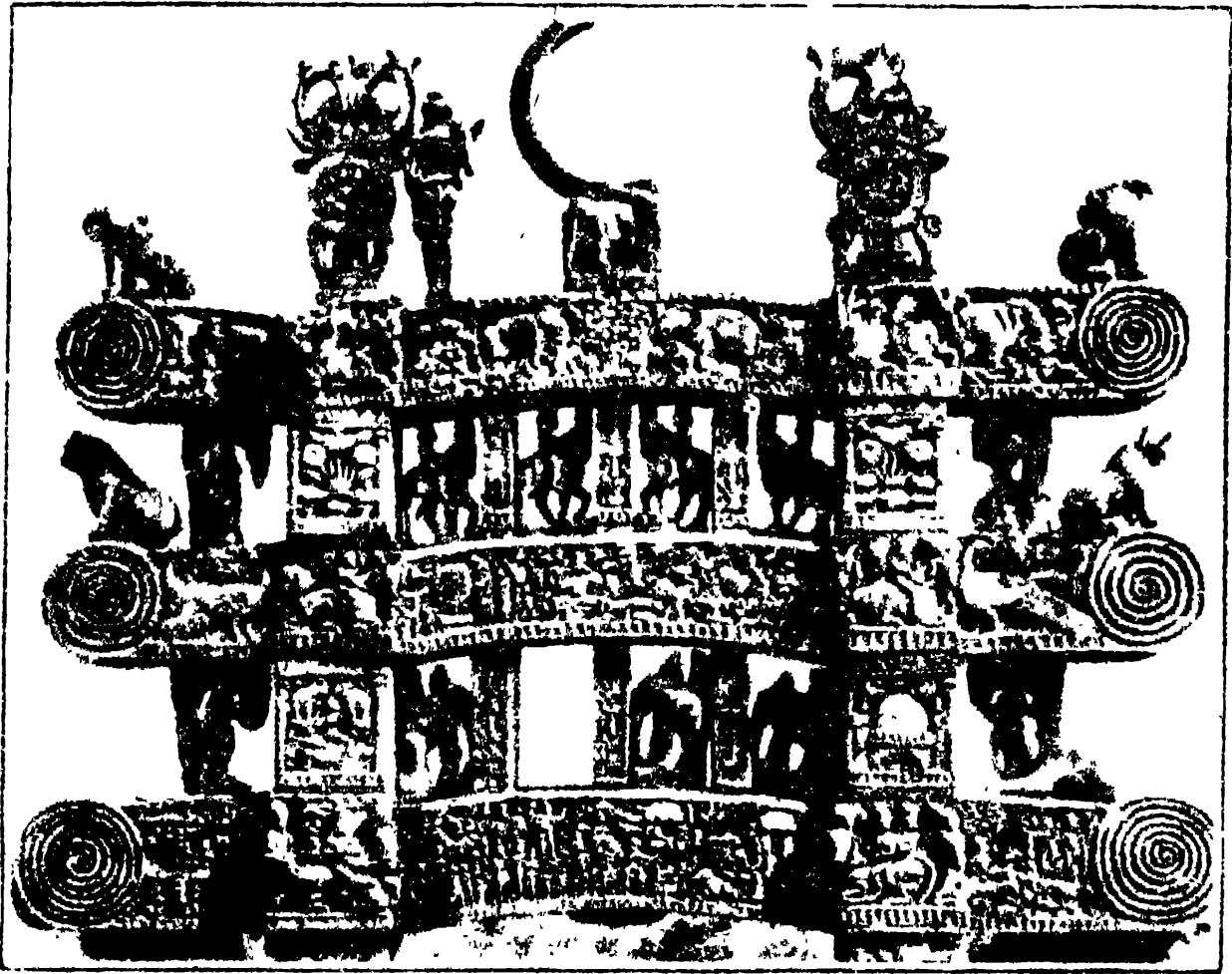
In the second century B.C., during the reign of the Śūṅgas, a big *stūpa* was constructed at Bhārhut. Nothing now remains of the *stūpa* itself, but a portion of the railings that surrounded it, and one of the gateways, are now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The railing is made of red sandstone and consists, as usual, of uprights, crossbars and coping-stone. All these have sculptures engraved on them representing incidents from Buddha's life, Jātaka stories and many humorous scenes. Short labels incised below the sculptures enable us to identify the episodes represented therein. Taken individually, the human figures do not appear to be well executed and there are obvious defects in the physiognomy and posture of the bodies. But taken as a mass, the sculptures represent the religious faiths and beliefs, the dress, costumes, and manners, and are executed with wonderful simplicity and vigour. We get an insight into the minds and habits of the common people of India, and a keynote of the joys and pleasures of life seems to pervade them all. Ancient India, with its robust optimism and vigorous faith in life, speaks, as it were, through these stones, in a tone that offers a sharp but pleasing contrast to the dark pessimistic views of life which some of the old religious texts are never tired of repeating. From this point of view, the art of Bhārhut is a great corrective to the impressions which we are likely to form from literature.

At Bodh-Gayā there is a small railing round the great temple. The railing probably belongs to about the first century B.C., but the temple is of a much later date. The sculptures on the railing belong to the same type as at Bhārhut, though the individual figures are somewhat better.

Sāñchī contains three big *stūpas* and, happily, they are all in a good state of preservation. The big *stūpa*, originally constructed by Aśoka, was enlarged during this period, and four gateways of elaborate construction were added to the railing, one in each cardinal direction. Although the railing is quite plain, the gateways are full of sculptures, illustrating the Jātaka stories and various episodes in the life of Gautama Buddha. The scenes represented are similar to those of Bhārhut, and convey more or less the same ideas, but the individual figures, the method of their grouping, mode of expression, and decorative elements—all show a far higher standard of technical skill and artistic conception. The obvious defects in the representation of the physique at Bhārhut are removed, and human figures are elegantly carved and shown in various difficult moods and poses. The sculptors of Sāñchī are throughout inspired

by a far higher sense of beauty, rhythm, and symmetry, and possess the difficult art of telling a complicated story in a simple lucid way. As at Bhārhut, we find before us a wonderful panorama of scenes of daily life and concrete illustrations of faith, hope, and ideals, though as a rule these are more complex and varied in character, showing a more intelligent appreciation of the facts and views of life.

On the whole, the railings at Bhārhut, Bodh-Gayā and Sāñchi may be regarded as three landmarks in the gradual evolution of



SANCHI GATEWAY

art during the two centuries, 150 B.C.—A.D. 50. The Indian artists had now mastered the difficult technique and acquired a highly-developed aesthetic sense. The stone sculptures proved in their hands to be a valuable medium for expressing faiths and beliefs, and ideas and feelings.

Mathurā has proved a large treasure-house of ruins of this period. No big railing, like that of Bhārhut or Sāñchi, with a continuous series of relief sculptures, has yet come to light, but we have instead numerous fragments of smaller railings with

sculptures, and quite a large number of images, either detached or engraved in very high relief on some architectural fragments.



Photo: A. K. Coomaraswamy

KUSHAN KING, MATHURĀ

The Mathurā sculptures are easily distinguished by the material used—a kind of spotted red stone. It is possible to classify the sculptures of Mathurā into two chronological periods. The earlier ones are rude and rough works, somewhat resembling those of

Bhārhut, but of a different style, and do not call for any special remark. The sculptures of the later period possess one distinguishing characteristic, viz. the representation of Buddha as a human figure. This is entirely unknown at Bhārhut, Bodh-Gayā and Sāñchī where Buddha is always represented by a symbol such as a wheel, a throne, or a pair of footprints, and never by any human figure. With the evolution of a human type of Buddha at Mathurā begins a new epoch in Indian art, and for centuries the best artistic efforts of India were directed towards giving a concrete expression of the spiritual ideals of India through the images of Buddha and other great beings.

The Gandhāra School

The Gandhāra school of sculpture has attained a celebrity perhaps beyond its merits. There was a time when European scholars considered it as the only school in ancient India which can rightfully claim a place in the domain of art. Many still regard it as the source of all subsequent development of art in India and the Far East. In spite of the undeniable merit of Gandhāra sculptures, the above views seem to be highly exaggerated.

The Gandhāra sculptures have been found in the ruins of Taxila and in various ancient sites in Afghānistān and West Pākistān. They consist mostly of images of Buddha and relief-sculptures representing scenes from Buddhist texts. Some technical characteristics easily distinguish them from all other specimens of Indian sculpture. In the first place, there is a tendency to mould the human body in a realistic manner with great attention to accuracy of physical details, especially by the delineation of muscles and the addition of moustaches, etc. Secondly, the representation of the thick drapery with large and bold fold-lines forms a distinct characteristic.

The Gandhāra sculptures accordingly offer a striking contrast to what we meet with elsewhere in India, viz. the smooth round features of the idealised human figures, draped in a transparent or semi-transparent cloth, closely fitting to the body and revealing its outline.

These distinguishing characteristics of Gandhāra sculpture were undoubtedly derived from Greek art, or, to be more precise, the Hellenistic art of Asia Minor and the Roman empire. Gandhāra art is accordingly known also as Indo-Greek or Graeco-Roman. There is, also, no doubt that this art owed its origin to the Greek rulers of Bactria and North-West India. But though the technique

was borrowed from Greece, the art was essentially Indian in spirit, and it was solely employed to give expression to the beliefs and practices of the Buddhists. With a few exceptions, no Greek story or legend, and no Greek art *motif* has been detected among the numerous specimens of Gandhāra sculpture. The Gandhāra artist had the hand of a Greek but the heart of an Indian.

The most important contribution of Gandhāra art was the evolution of an image of Buddha, perhaps an imitation of a Greek God like Apollo. Fine images of Buddha and Bodhisatva, and relief-sculptures illustrating various episodes of Buddha's present and past lives, are remarkably executed in a kind of black stone. For a long time it was believed that the Gandhāra Buddha image served as the model for those executed at Mathurā and other centres. But it is now recognised that the Buddha image was evolved independently at Mathurā and Gandhāra. There is a striking difference between the Buddha images of Gandhāra and those of the Indian interior. The former laid stress on accuracy of anatomical details and physical beauty, while the latter strove towards imparting a sublime and spiritual expression to the figure. The one was realistic and the other idealistic, and this may be regarded as the vital difference between Western and Indian art. The rich and varied contents of Gandhāra sculpture, like those of Sāñchi and Bhārhut, hold before us a mirror, as it were, reflecting ancient life and ideals.

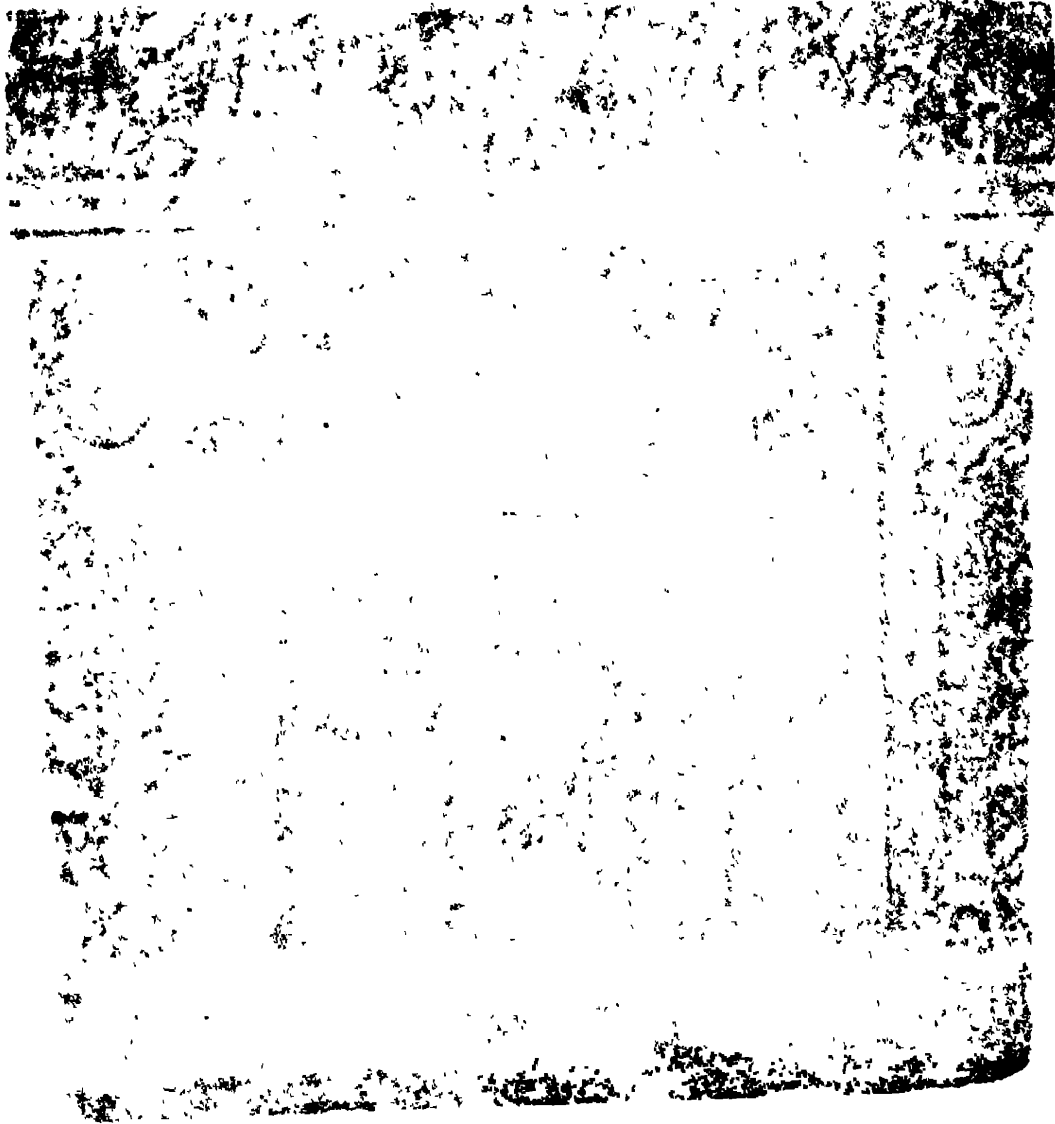
It may be added that both the schools of Mathurā and Gandhāra flourished under the lavish patronage of Scythian kings. The



BODHISATVA, LAHORE MUSEUM

portrait-statues of the Kushān kings add a novel feature to the art of this period. The Kushān art, particularly that of the Gandhāra school, spread through Chinese Turkestan to the Far East and influenced even the arts of China and Japan.

Somewhat later than the flourishing period of the schools of sculpture described above, beautiful *stūpas* were erected in the



India Office, London

CASING SLAB, AMARĀVATĪ STŪPA

lower valley of the Kṛishṇā river, at Amarāvati, Jagayyapeta and Nāgārjunikoṇḍa. Not only were the railings of the Amarāvati *stūpa* made of marble, but the dome itself was covered with slabs of the same material. It must have produced a marvellous effect, when intact. Unfortunately, the entire *stūpa* is in ruins, and the fragments of its railings have been removed, partly to the British Museum, London, and partly to the Government Museum at Madras. The sculptures of all the *stūpas* resemble one another and

are marked by striking differences in style from those of Northern India. Hence they are classed as belonging to a new school, viz. that of Amarāvati. The figures at Amarāvati are characterised by slim, blithe features and they are represented in most difficult poses and curves. But the scenes are mostly overcrowded, and although there is a distinct charm in individual figures, the general effect is not very pleasing. Yet there is no doubt that the technique of art had reached a high degree of development. The plants and flowers, particularly the lotuses, are most admirably represented in this school. The image of Buddha occurs here and there, but the Blessed One is often represented by a symbol. It thus points to the period of transition between Bhārhut, Bodh-Gayā and Sāñchī on the one hand and Mathurā and Gandhāra on the other.

At Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, important relics of the period have recently been discovered as a result of excavations made by the Archaeological Survey of India. The finds include a *stūpa*, two Chaityas and a monastery. Near the *stūpa* were found slabs of limestone illustrating scenes from Buddha's life. The panel shown on p. 231 represents the nativity and seven footprints of Buddha on the piece of cloth held by the deities, who were present to welcome the arrival of the Blessed One.

The period under review (c. 200 B.C. to A.D. 320) is not so rich in architecture as in sculptures. There were, of course, beautiful temples and monasteries, and the famous tower of Kanishka at Purushapur (Peshāwār) was one of the wonders of Asia. But all these have perished without leaving any trace behind. Excepting the *stūpas* referred to above, there is only one class of buildings which merit serious attention as works of art. These are the caves hewn out of solid rock, of which hundreds have been found in different parts of India. The caves of the Aśokan period were plain chambers, but now the addition of pillars and sculptures made them beautiful works of art. Some of the caves were used as monasteries, i.e. residences of monks. These were quite plain and consisted of a central hall with small cells on all sides. Others were used as Chaityas or halls of worship. A Chaitya was a fine work of art. The fully developed specimen consisted of a long rectangular hall with apsidal end (i.e. the side opposite the entrance was semicircular and not straight). Two long rows of pillars divided the hall into a nave (big central part) and two side aisles (narrow parts at the two sides). A small *stūpa*, called a *Dāgoba*, stood near the apsidal end. The front wall was decorated with elaborate sculptures, and there were three small doorways leading to the nave and the side aisles. But a big horseshoe window above

the central doorway admitted a volume of light which illumined the *Dāgoba* at the far end. When worshippers assembled in comparative darkness in the nave (central part) before the bright *Dāgoba* in front, the effect must have been very solemn and impressive.

There are many such Chaitya caves at Nāsik, Bhājā, Bedsā, Kārle and other places in the Bombay Presidency. The Kārle cave is unanimously regarded as the finest specimen, on account of the beauty of the sculptures on the front wall, the remarkable rows



PANEL ILLUSTRATING THE NATIVITY OF THE BUDDHA, NĀGĀRJUNIKONDA

of pillars inside the hall, and the fine proportion of the different parts of the building.

In addition to the pillars inside these caves, we have also several free-standing pillars, as for example that at Besnagar which was dedicated as a *Garuḍadhvaja* by the Greek ambassador, Heliodoros. They are in many cases monoliths (in the case of rock-cut caves they are necessarily so) but they lack the wonderful polish, the fine proportions and the grand capitals which characterise the best pillars of Aśoka. In this respect there was undoubtedly a decline. But in sculptures and the construction of *stūpas* and caves there was wonderful progress. It is perfectly true that the fine figures of certain animals which we see on the pillars of Aśoka have no



CHAITYA CAVE, KARLE

parallel in subsequent times, but the loss is made up by the delineation of human figures and the evolution of the wonderful image of Buddha.

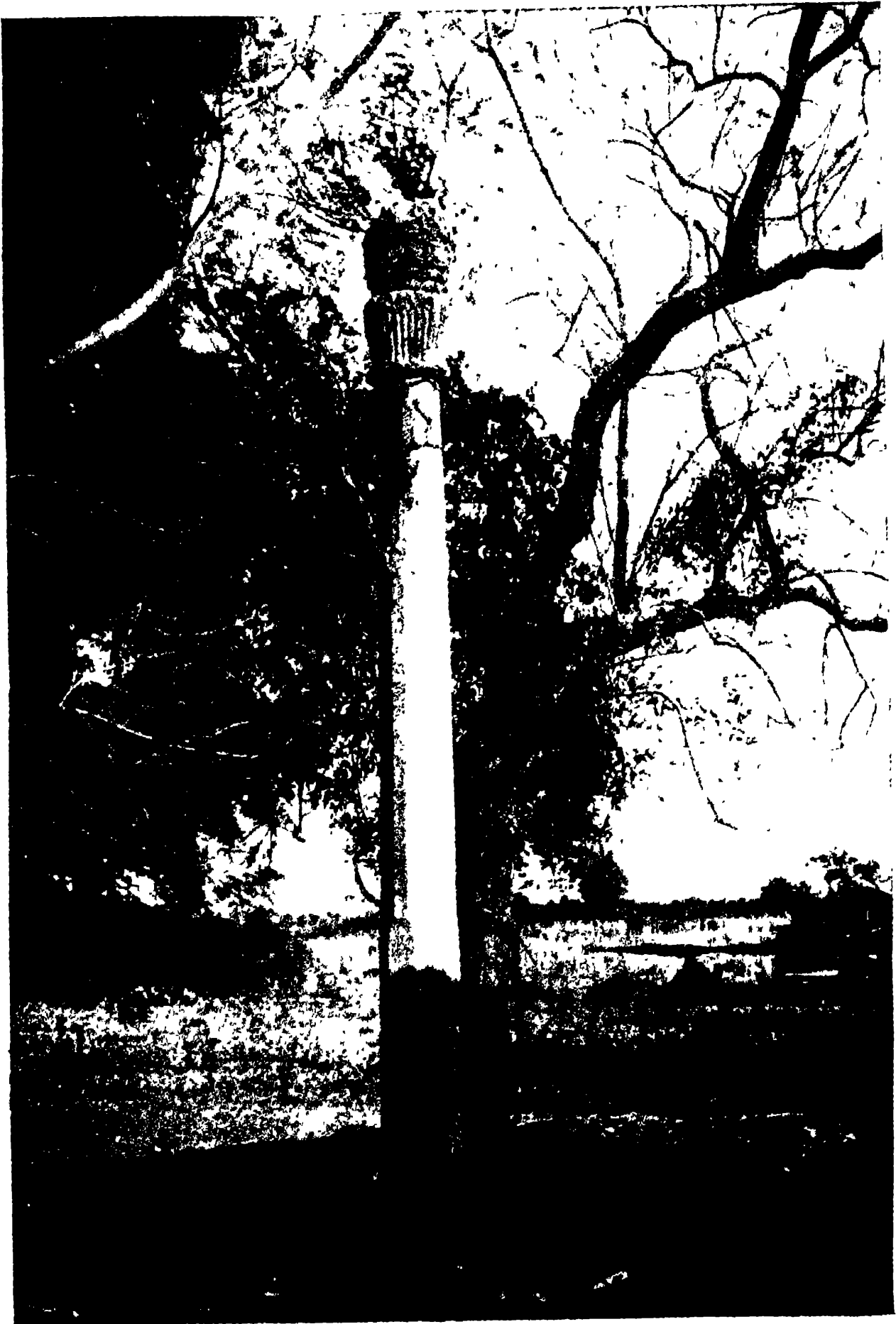
The Gupta Period (A.D. 320-600)¹

With the Gupta period we enter upon the classical phase of Indian sculpture. By the efforts of centuries techniques of art were perfected, definite types were evolved, and ideals of beauty were formulated with precision. There was no more groping in the dark, and no more experiments. A thorough intelligent grasp of the true aims and essential principles of art, a highly developed aesthetic sense, and a masterly execution with steady hands produced those remarkable images which were to be the ideal and despair of the Indian artists of subsequent ages. The Gupta sculptures not only remained models of Indian art in all times to come, but they also served as such in the Indian colonies in the Far East. The sculptures of the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java, Vietnam, Cambodia and even Celebes bear the indelible stamp of Gupta art.

The most important contribution of Gupta art is the evolution of the perfect types of divinities, both Buddhist and Brāhmanical. A large number of Buddha images have been unearthed at Sārnāth near Benares, and one of them is justly regarded as the finest in the whole of India. Stone and bronze images of Buddha have also been found at Mathurā and other places. The images of Śiva, Viṣṇu and other Brāhmanical gods are sculptured in some of the finest panels of the Deogarh temple (Jhansi district) and also occur elsewhere. These images are the best products of Indian art. They present a beautiful figure, full of charm and dignity, a graceful pose and a radiant spiritual expression. In general, a sublime idealism, combined with a highly-developed sense of rhythm and beauty, characterises the Gupta sculptures, and there are vigour and refinement in their design and execution. The intellectual element dominates Gupta art and keeps under control the highly-developed emotional display and the exuberance of decorative elements which characterise the art of succeeding ages.

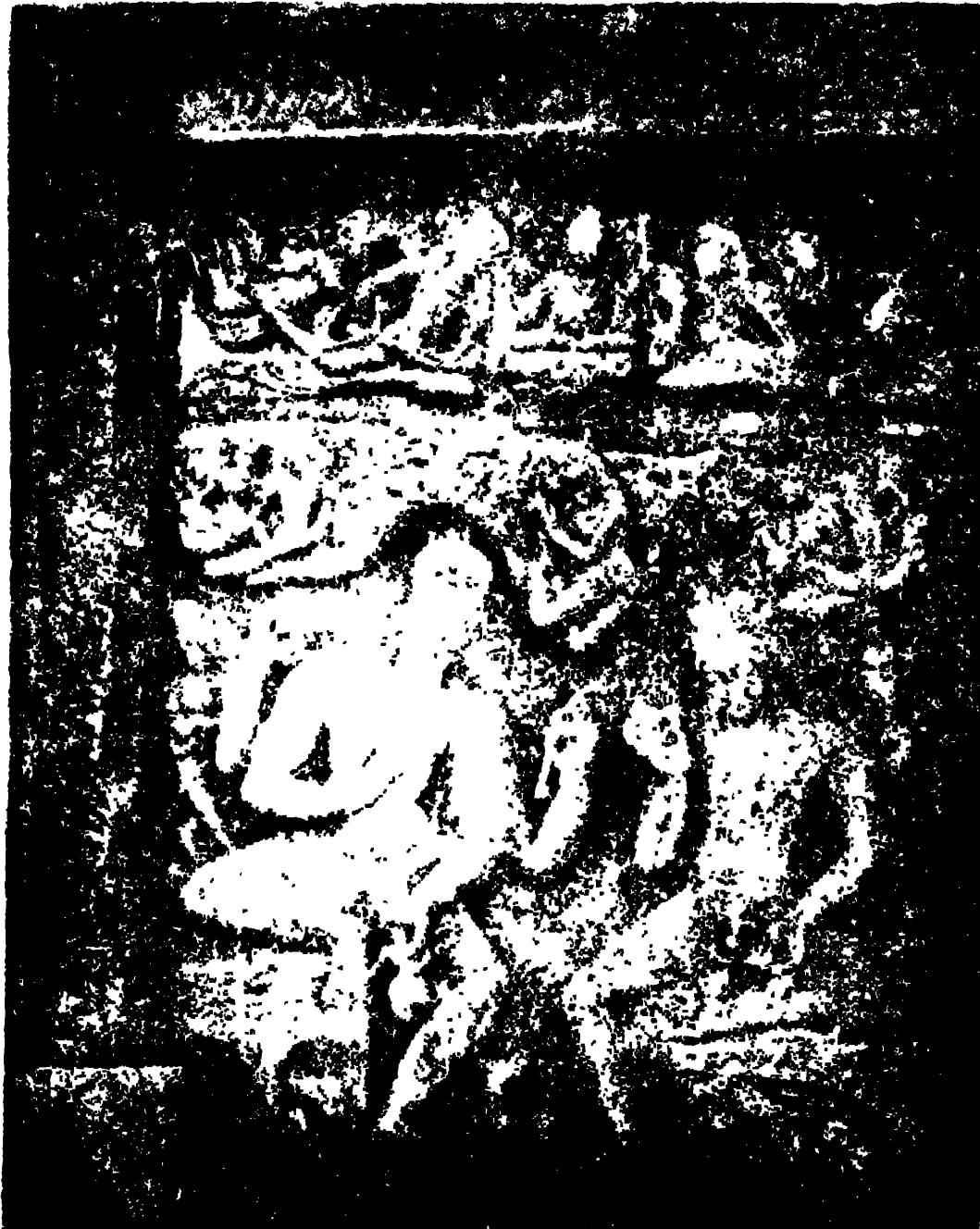
The art of casting metals reached a degree of development which may well be regarded as wonderful. Hiuen Tsang saw at

¹ Although the political supremacy of the Imperial Guptas did not last much beyond A.D. 495, the style of art ushered in by them continued till A.D. 600 or even somewhat later. Hence the title "Gupta period" in relation to art covers a much longer period than what would be understood in political history.



GARUDA PILLAR, BESNAGAR

Nālandā a copper image of Buddha, about 80 feet high. The Bronze Buddha, found at Sultānganj, is $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and is a fine piece of sculpture. The Iron Pillar of Delhi, near the Qutb Minār, is a marvellous work belonging to the early Gupta period. A century



By courtesy of the Indian Museum, Calcutta

NARA-NĀRĀYANA, DEOGARH TEMPLE

ago, it would have been difficult, even for the best European foundry, to manufacture a similar piece made of wrought iron.

The art of painting reached its height of glory and splendour in this age. The fine fresco-paintings on the walls and ceilings of the Ajantā Caves have extorted the unstinted admiration of the

whole world. Of the twenty-nine caves, sixteen contained paintings which survived, to a greater or less extent, even as late as 1879. Most of these, it is sad to think, have been destroyed, and the rest are also gradually crumbling to dust. Although some are as old as the first century A.D., most of them belong to the Gupta Age. A fine conception, brilliant colour, and admirable drawing invested these paintings with a unique charm which we can only faintly realise in their present ruined condition. In addition to decorative designs "as varied and graceful as they are fanciful" and "executed with masterly skill", they depict sacred objects and symbols, the figures of Buddha, and the incidents of his life (including past lives described in the *Jātaka* stories). Those known as "The Dying Princess", "The Mother and Child", etc., have won the highest admiration. The fresco-paintings at Sīgiriya in Ceylon, executed towards the close of the fifth century A.D., show a close resemblance to those of Ajantā and are in a better state of preservation. Some fresco paintings of high merit also adorn the caves at Bāgh.

Compared with sculpture, Gupta architecture, to judge by the extant remains, must be regarded as poor. The stone temple at Sāñchī, like that at Deogarh, is very small, but exhibits refinement in style. The brick temple at Bhītargāon is large but ruined. Remains of stone temples of this period have also been found at Nachna-ke-Talai and other places. These temples are well-designed, and consist of a square chamber, a cella (shrine), and a portico or veranda as essential elements. They are decorated with fine sculptured panels, but the decoration is properly subordinated to, and is in full harmony with, the architectural plan of the buildings. There is no doubt that magnificent temples of large dimensions were constructed during the Gupta age, but they have been completely destroyed. High and elaborately-worked towers (*śikharas*) which surmounted the roofs of temples in later ages, had not yet made their appearance, but the beginnings of this development are seen in the Bhītargāon temple and the miniature representations of temples on relief-sculptures of the Gupta period.

The artistic excellence of the Gupta period also found expression in the rich variety of gold coins issued by the wealthiest and mightiest monarchs of the age. According to some scholars, foreign influence is clearly traceable in this series, but the engravers who produced them were no mere imitators of the work of others. They gave free and spontaneous expression to their own ideas, and skilfully assimilated alien models with their own national tradition. The masterly execution of these coins is only matched by the elegance of their design, and they are justly regarded as among the finest examples of Indian art.

The Medieval Period (A.D. 600–1200)

During the six hundred years that followed the Gupta age, architecture gradually assumed the more important rôle in the evolution of Indian art. It was during this age that the different styles of architecture were evolved and led to the construction of the magnificent temples which we see to-day all over India.

Broadly speaking, there were two important styles of architecture,—Indo-Aryan or North-Indian, and Dravidian or South-Indian. The difference lies mainly in the shape of the *sikhara* or the high tower-like superstructure which now almost universally surmounts the cella or the shrine containing the image of the deity. The North Indian *sikhara* (see illustration on p. 238) has the appearance of a solid mass of curvilinear tower, bulging in the middle and ending in almost a point. The South Indian *sikhara* (see p. 242) looks like a pyramid made up of successive storeys each smaller than, and receding a little from, the one beneath it. This also ended in a small round piece of stone as its crowning member. Both types of *sikharas* were minutely carved with decorative sculptures.

There is another essential difference between the two styles of architecture. In South Indian temples pillars play an important part while they are altogether absent in edifices constructed in the North Indian style.

North India

Temples with curvilinear *sikharas* are found all over Northern India, and there are large groups of them at Bhuvaneshvar in Orissa, and Khajurāho in the State of Chattarpur in Central India. Many of these temples are covered with sculpture from top to bottom, and present a grand and magnificent appearance. Infinite charm and variety are introduced in the *sikhara* by suitable modification of forms and application of sculptures, without destroying its essential characteristics. In the Khajurāho temples, as in most later examples, miniature *sikharas* are used as decorative ornaments on the body of the *sikhara* (see p. 239), and, in course of time, these decorative *sikharas* are developed into small independent *sikharas*, round about the central one.

It is impossible to describe in detail any one of these temples. The Lingarāja temple and the Rājarānī temple at Bhuvaneshvar, and some of the temples erected by the Chandella kings at Khajurāho, may be regarded as the finest specimens of earlier and later types. The temple of Jagannāth at Purī, though more famous,

is less beautiful. There are also a good many fine temples in Rājputāna.

In addition to the normal type, independent styles were developed in certain localities, notably Kāshmir and Rājputāna. The Mārtand temple is a good specimen of the former. As to the latter, the two temples at Dilāvarā on Mount Abu deserve special mention. They are small in dimension and not crowned by *śikharas*. But the dome which covers the shrine and the pillars of the *maṇḍapa* in front are worked with an elegance and refinement which defy all descrip-



LINGARĀJA TEMPLE, BHUVANESVAR

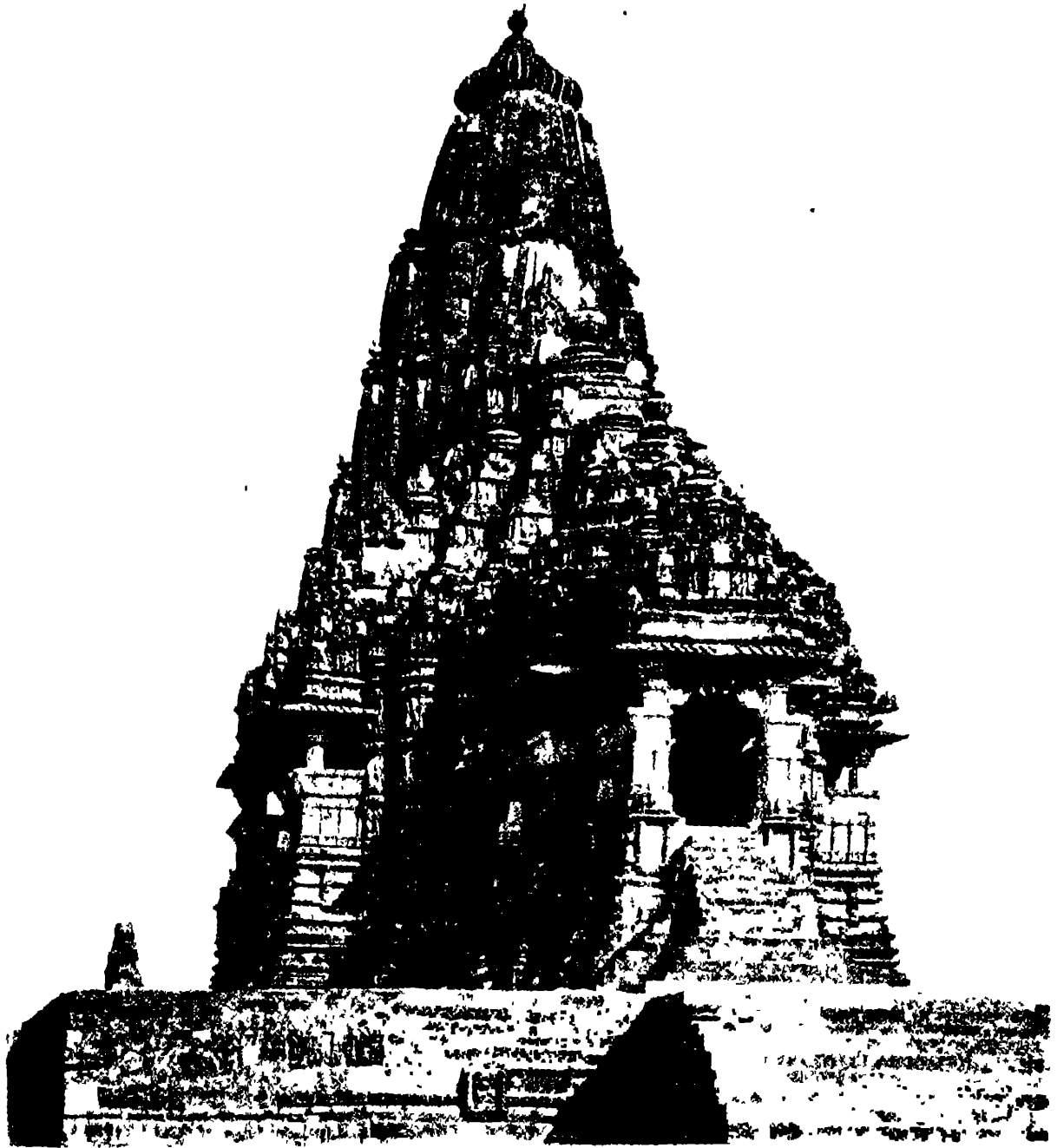
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tion. The hard stone is worked as if it were a fragile substance like paper. The rich exuberance of their decoration displays almost superhuman skill and entitles them to rank as priceless treasures of art. One of these was erected by a minister or governor named Vimala Shā in A.D. 1032 and the other by Tejahpāla in A.D. 1231.

South India

The history of architecture and sculpture in the South Indian Peninsula begins with the Pallava temples, and here, for the first

time, we meet with the Dravidian style. In addition to the temples in the capital city, Kāñchī or Conjeeveram, and other places, some of the rock-cut temples, known as the seven Pagodas

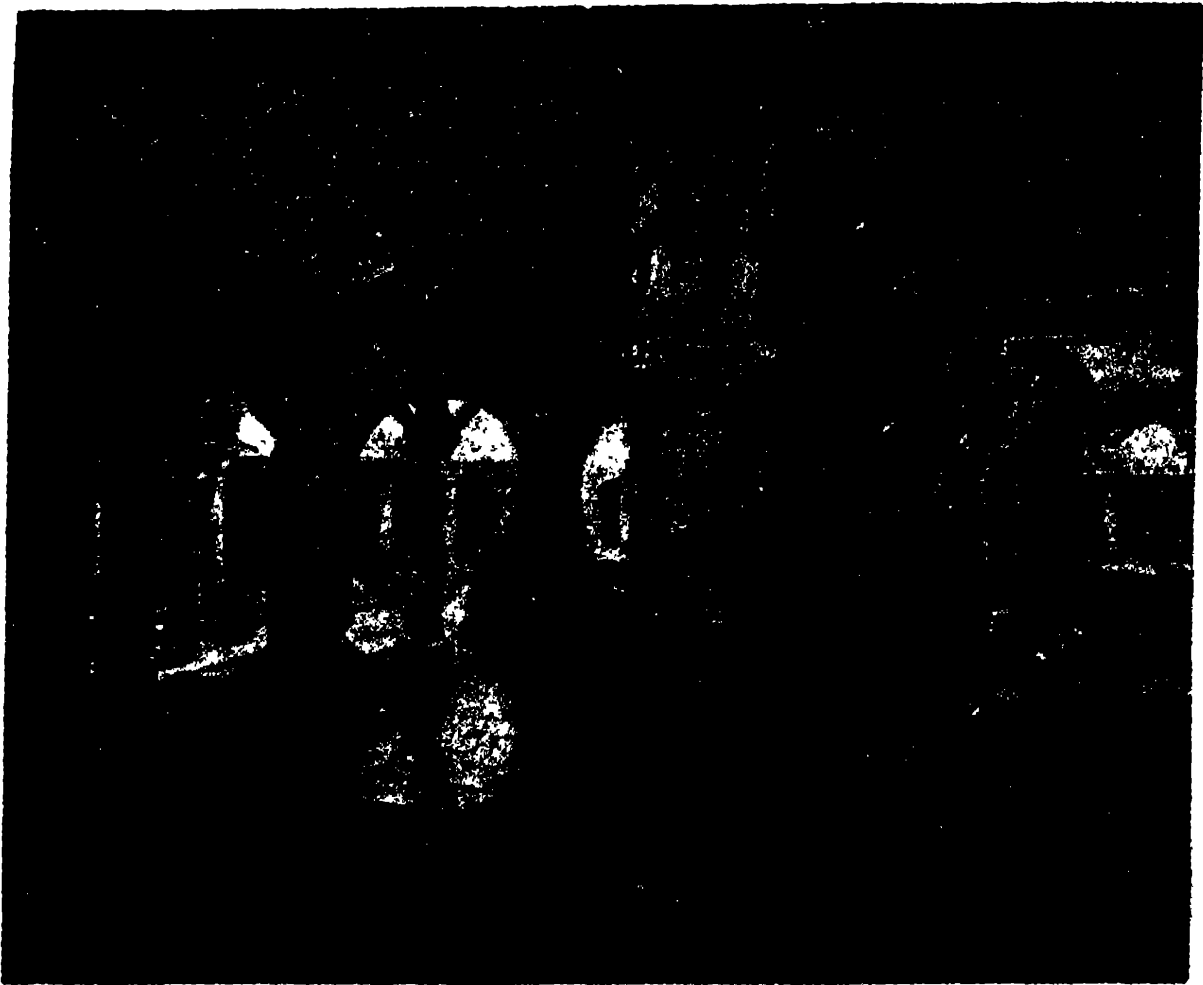


Photo, Johnston & Hoffmann

MAHĀDEVA TEMPLE, KHAJURĀHO

or *Rathas* of Māmallapuram, are built in this style which may therefore be justly called the Pallava style. The latter are small temples, each of which is cut out of a single big rock-boulder. They lie near the sea-beach and adorned the town called Māmallapuram or Mahābalipuram, founded by the great Pallava

king, Narasimhavarman (seventh century A.D.) It is now an insignificant place, and its only attraction is provided by these wonderful monolithic temples and a series of fine sculptures on rock-walls (see p. 241). The temples or pagodas are named after the five Pāṇḍava brothers and their common spouse Draupadī (Dharmarājarath; Bhīm-ratha, Draupadī-ratha, etc.). These monolithic temples, wrought out of massive stone, are complete with all the details of an ordinary temple and stand to-day as an undying

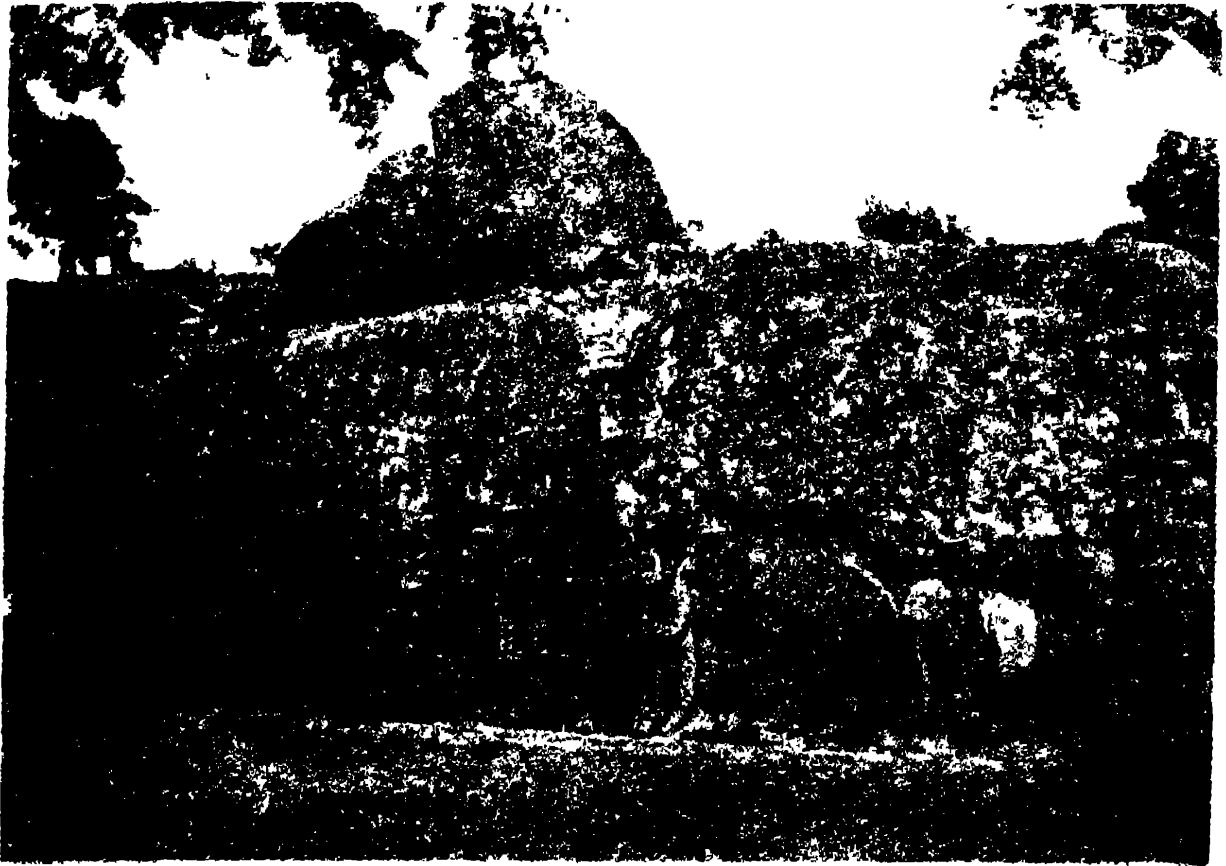


TRAYAṆḌALA'S TEMPLE, MOUNT ABU

testimony to the superb quality of Pallava art. Among the sculptures, one large composition has obtained great celebrity. The scene represented is usually described as the penance of Arjuna, but this is very doubtful. There are also many rock-cut caves belonging to the Pallava period.

It is important to note that the earliest specimens of Pallava art already exhibit a fairly advanced stage of development. Although we have no remains of an earlier epoch, we must presume its existence. For the men who built the temples at Kāñchi or Māmallapuram, or wrought the sculptures on the rocks at the

etter place, were no novices in their art, and must have been trained in schools with art traditions of centuries and generations at their back. The problem is analogous to that offered by the finished art of the Maurya period, and its probable solution has been discussed above. But the theory that foreign artists were imported to do the work can hardly be maintained in this case. We must hold, therefore, that earlier artists mostly worked in wood or other perishable materials, and hence their work has



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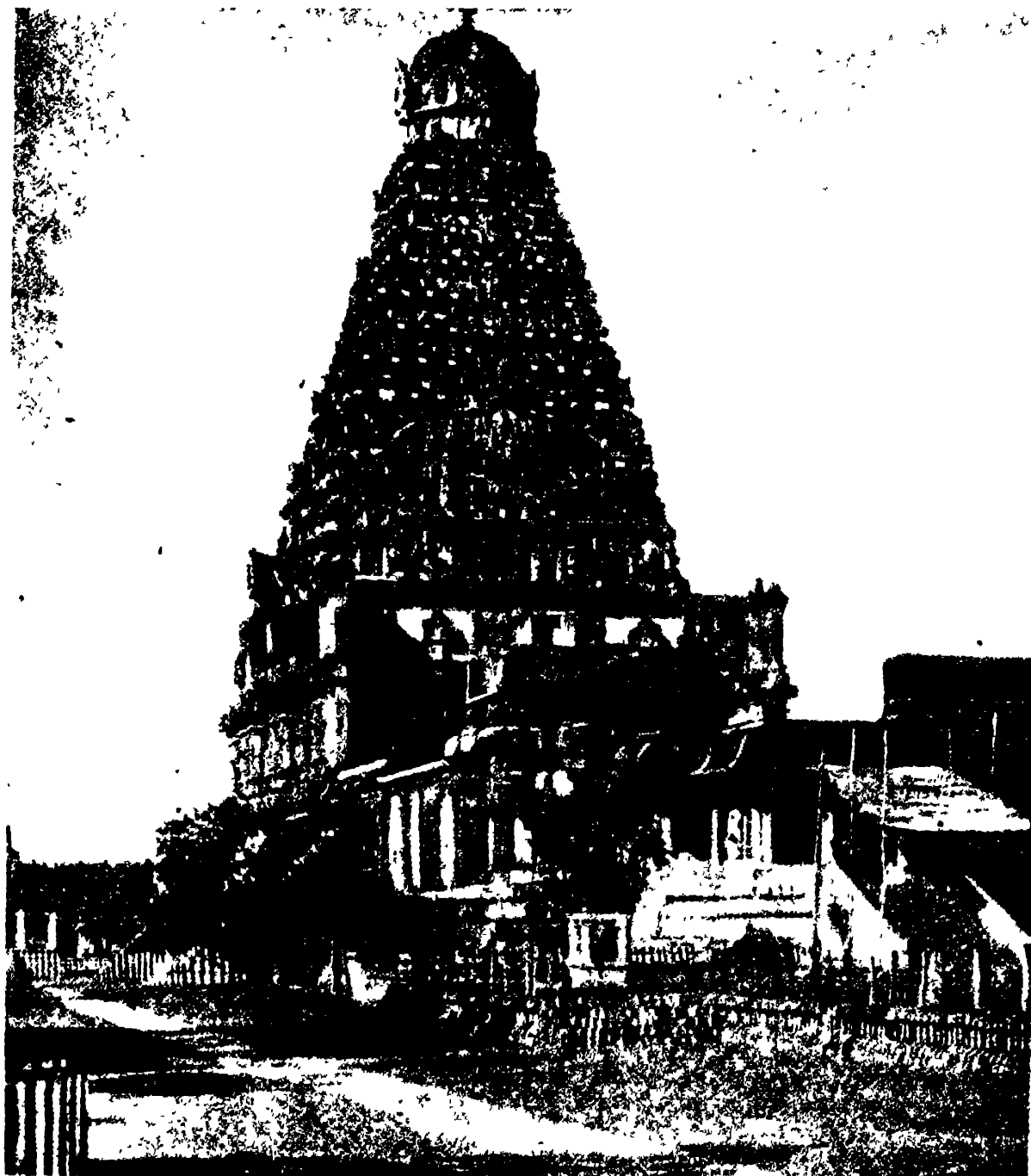
ROCK-CUT SCULPTURE, MAMALLAPURAM

entirely disappeared, though chance or luck might some day restore a few relics of it.

The style of Pallava architecture not only set the standard in the South Indian Peninsula, but also largely influenced the architecture of the Indian colonies in the Far East. The characteristic Pallava or Dravidian type of *sikhara* is met with in the temples of Java, Cambodia, and Vietnam. But there are important differences between them and the South Indian temples. The pillars which form such an important adjunct to the latter are altogether absent in the former.

The Cholas who supplanted the Pallavas in South India were mighty builders. The Dravidian style was developed and almost

perfected under them. Perhaps the best example of this style is furnished by the great Śaiva temple at Tanjore built by Rājarāja the Great. The great *śikhara*, consisting of fourteen storeys, rises to a height of 190 feet and is crowned by a massive dome consisting of a



TANJORE TEMPLE

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single block of stone. It is said that this huge block was carried to the immense height by being rolled along an inclined road, about four miles long, specially built for this purpose. The massive building is covered from the base to the top with sculptures and decorative mouldings. It occupies the centre of a courtyard with other

subsidiary chapels, but the whole area is dominated by the high tower over the shrine which is a conspicuous landmark in the locality.

There was another massive temple at Gangaikondā-cholapuram, the new capital city built by Rājendra Chola in the Trichinopoly district. The city was also adorned with a magnificent palace and a vast artificial lake, with stone embankment, more than fifteen miles long. All these are now in ruins.

Chola art is characterised by a massive grandeur. The huge structures were decorated with minute sculptures involving immense labour and infinite pains. As Fergusson very aptly remarked, the Chola artists conceived like giants and finished like jewellers.

A new development was slowly taking place in Chola art which was destined to modify Dravidian architecture in later times. This was the addition of a huge gateway, called a *Gopuram*, to the enclosure of the temple. Gradually, the *Gopurams* came to be multiplied and assumed huge proportions, being composed, like the temple itself, of a large number of superimposed storeys. Ultimately the gigantic *Gopurams*, sometimes large in number, came to occupy the dominant place by their towering height and lavish decoration, while the central shrine, being far less imposing, was reduced to comparative insignificance. The *Gopuram* at Kumbhakonam, for example, is a very splendid piece of work, by itself, but it so completely overshadows the main shrine that the structure, taken as a whole, is less pleasing and produces far less artistic effect than might have been reasonably expected.

There are many massive temples in South India, built in the same style. In addition to *Gopurams*, pillared halls and long colonnades were added as new features in the later temples. Modern travellers are struck with awe by the sight of the gigantic temples at Madurā, Śrīrangam, Rāmeśvaram, and other places, with successive enclosures, long courts with a bewildering maze of buildings, thousand-pillared halls, and long vistas of covered colonnades which seem to fade into the distance. But most of these temples are of a much later period.

The Upper Deccan

Between North India and the Far South, which had evolved two independent styles of architecture, lay the Deccan plateau where both the styles in pure or slightly modified form, known as Chālukya style, were in use. The Chālukyas and the Rāshtrakūṭas who ruled in this region were great builders. Near the Chālukya capital, Bādāmi, we find a number of cave-temples which are

dedicated to Brāhmaṇical gods, and contain a number of fine images and good sculptures. There are also many stone temples at Bādāmi and various other places constructed in the ordinary way. Most of these show the Pallava or Dravidian style. The same style was also largely adopted by the Rāshtrakūṭas, and the world-famous Kailāsa Temple at Ellorā is a marvellous specimen of the Dravidian style. It was constructed during the reign of Kṛishṇa I, in the latter half of the eighth century A.D. The process of construction employed in the case of the Māmallapuram *Rathas* was repeated here on a much bigger scale. An entire hillside was first demarcated and separated from a long range of mountains; and then a huge temple was cut out of it in the same way as each *Ratha* at Māmallapuram was cut out of a rock-boulder. The big temple, standing in an open court, now appears like an ordinary one, but it is merely the remnant of a solid mass of stone that once formed a part of the hill which now surrounds the temple on three sides.

The temple has a Dravidian *śikhara* and is elaborately carved with fine sculptures. Caves, excavated in the sides of the hills round it, contain big halls decorated with finely wrought pillars and images of various Brāhmaṇical divinities. The Kailāsa temple at Ellorā is a splendid achievement of art, and considering the technical skill and labour involved, is unequalled in the history of the world.

The hill at Ellorā contains a number of rock-cut caves within a short distance of the famous temple. The caves generally resemble those of the earlier period at Nāsik and Kārle, but the *façade* of the Viśvakarmā cave shows a pleasing modification.

The caves on the island of Elephanta, near Bombay, are also renowned and contain a number of large and remarkable images of Brāhmaṇical gods.

The Mysore Plateau

The Hoysalas who succeeded the later Chālukyas and ruled over the Mysore plateau in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D. evolved a new style of architecture. They perhaps inherited the art-traditions of their predecessors, the Gaṅgas, during whose rule the famous colossal Jaina image of Gomata was constructed by Chāmunda Ray, a minister, in about A.D. 983. The statue, placed on the top of a hillock at Śravaṇa Belgola, is more than 56 feet high, i.e. about ten times the size of a human being. It is wrought out of a single block of stone of the hardest species. In boldness of conception and difficulty of execution, it has perhaps no rival among the sculptures of the world.

The Hoysalas displayed the same qualities, though in a different way, in the construction of their temples. These temples are not square but polygonal or star-shaped. The essential characteristics of these temples are the high bases or plinths which follow all the windings of the temple and thus offer a huge length of vacant space to be elaborately carved with sculptures. The *śikhara* is pyramidal but low, and may be regarded as a modified type of the Dravidian. The best-known example of the Hoysala style is the famous Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid or Dorasamudra. It



HOYSALESVARA TEMPLE, HALEBID

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stands on a terrace, about five or six feet high, paved with stone slabs. The entire height is covered with a succession of eleven running friezes of elephants, tigers, scrolls, horsemen, and celestial beasts and birds. Each frieze has a length of 700 feet or more, and the entire surface is covered with sculptures. The lowest frieze, for example, contains no less than two thousand elephants finely executed, and most of them with riders and trappings. Similar elaboration of decoration is found in the remaining ten friezes. The Hoysalesvara temple contains, as has been aptly remarked, "one of the most marvellous exhibitions of human labour to be found even in the patient East".

Medieval Sculptures

The medieval sculptures may best be studied with reference to the temples which they adorn. There were, besides, isolated images of gods and goddesses, in considerable numbers. There were many local schools with distinctive characteristics, fostered by different ruling dynasties (e.g. Pālas, Senas, Chandellas, Kalachuris). It is neither possible nor necessary to refer in detail to these numerous schools spread all over India. The medieval sculptures are gradually dominated more and more by religious influence and less by aesthetic ideas. Sometimes they seem ugly and even horrible to the modern eye, though they represent faithfully some religious concept. The conception of Naṭarāja Śiva is one of the few valuable contributions of medieval art, especially in South India. In North India we come across both Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical images of a fairly high standard, but there is hardly any original conception. In the later period they are influenced by Tāntrik ideas which are not always very pleasing to the modern taste.

Art in ancient India has in the main been a handmaid of religion. It has ordinarily expressed the prevailing religious faiths and beliefs, and spiritual conceptions and emotions. To understand and appreciate it properly one must have a thorough understanding of the different phases of religious evolution. In earlier periods, however, there was more of really artistic spirit, and the religious ideas were also more compatible with modern aesthetic taste. Gradually there was a decline in artistic feeling and the artists were mere mechanical instruments in rendering, to order, the later concepts of religion.

Medieval Painting

The ceilings of the rock-cut temple at Kailāsa and the adjoining caves contain pictures of a type and style different from those of Ajantā and Bāgh. The cave temple at Sittannavasal in Pudukottai (Madras) contains some fine paintings of the time of the Pallava king Mahendravarman. Chola paintings of the eleventh century A.D. have been discovered in the great temple at Tanjore. The art of painting in later periods is mostly known from illuminations on palm-leaves of manuscripts found in Eastern India and Gujarāt, but they are of much inferior quality.

Conclusion

A review of the progress and development of Indian art, such as we have attempted above, is necessary for the proper under-

standing of the high culture and refinement of the ancient Indians. For true art is an unerring expression of mind, and a national art is a true reflex of national character. Great nations of the world have left behind them unmistakable evidence of their greatness in their works of art. The nature and excellence of art constitute a sure means by which we can understand the essential characteristics of a nation and make a fair estimate of its greatness. Judged by the standard of art, Indian civilisation must be regarded as occupying a very high place indeed among those of antiquity. It exhibits not only grace and refinement but technical skill and patient industry of a very high order. Taken in a mass, Indian art offers the most vivid testimony to the wonderful resources in men and money possessed by the rulers, and the religious spirit, occasionally reaching to a sublime height, that dominated the entire population. It shows, as the national ideal, the subordination of ideas of physical beauty and material comfort to ethical conceptions and spiritual bliss. Amid the luxuries and comforts of worldly life, the thought of the world beyond never ceased to exercise a dominant influence. The changes in spiritual ideas and ideals, from the sublime purity of early Buddhism to the less pleasing forms of the Tāntrik cult, are also reflected in art. A more detailed study of the subject is beyond the scope of the present work, but its meaning and significance for the correct interpretation of ancient Indian life must be clearly grasped by every student of History.

GENEALOGICAL TABLES TO PART I

THE MAURYAS

Chandragupta Priyadarsana

Bindusāra Āmitraghāṭa

**Asokavardhana
Priyadarśin**

Mahendra	Sanghamitrā	Chārurnati	Kunāla	Jalauka (Kashmir)	Tivara
			Bandhupālita (Dasaratha?)	Samprati Śālīsūka Devadharmā (-Varman) Satamdhana Bṛihadratha	

THE EARLY GUPTAS

Gupta

Ghatotkache

Chandra Gupta I = Kumāradevi (Lichobhavi)

Samudra Gupta (Parākramāṅka; Śrī Vikrama?)

Chandra Gupta II (Vikramāditya) (Deva Gupta)

Govinda Gupta (Tirhut)	Kumāra Gupta I (Mahendrāditya)	Prabhāvatī (Queen of the Vākātakas)
Skanda Gupta (Vikramāditya)	Puru Gupta (Śrī Vikrama)	Ghatotkacha Gupta (?) (Tumain)

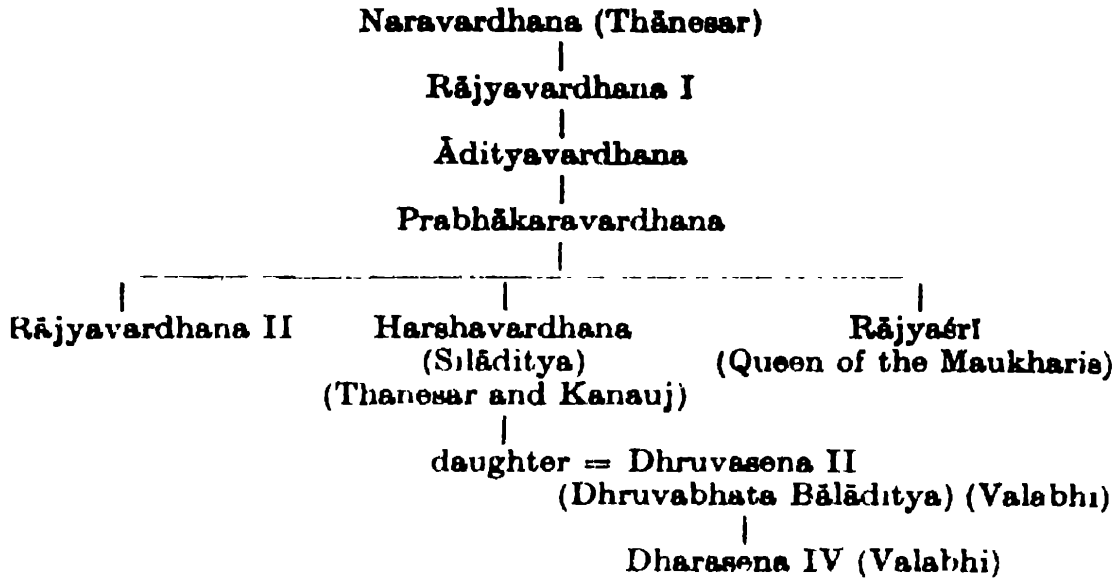
Narasimha Gupta
(Bālāditya)

Budha Gupta

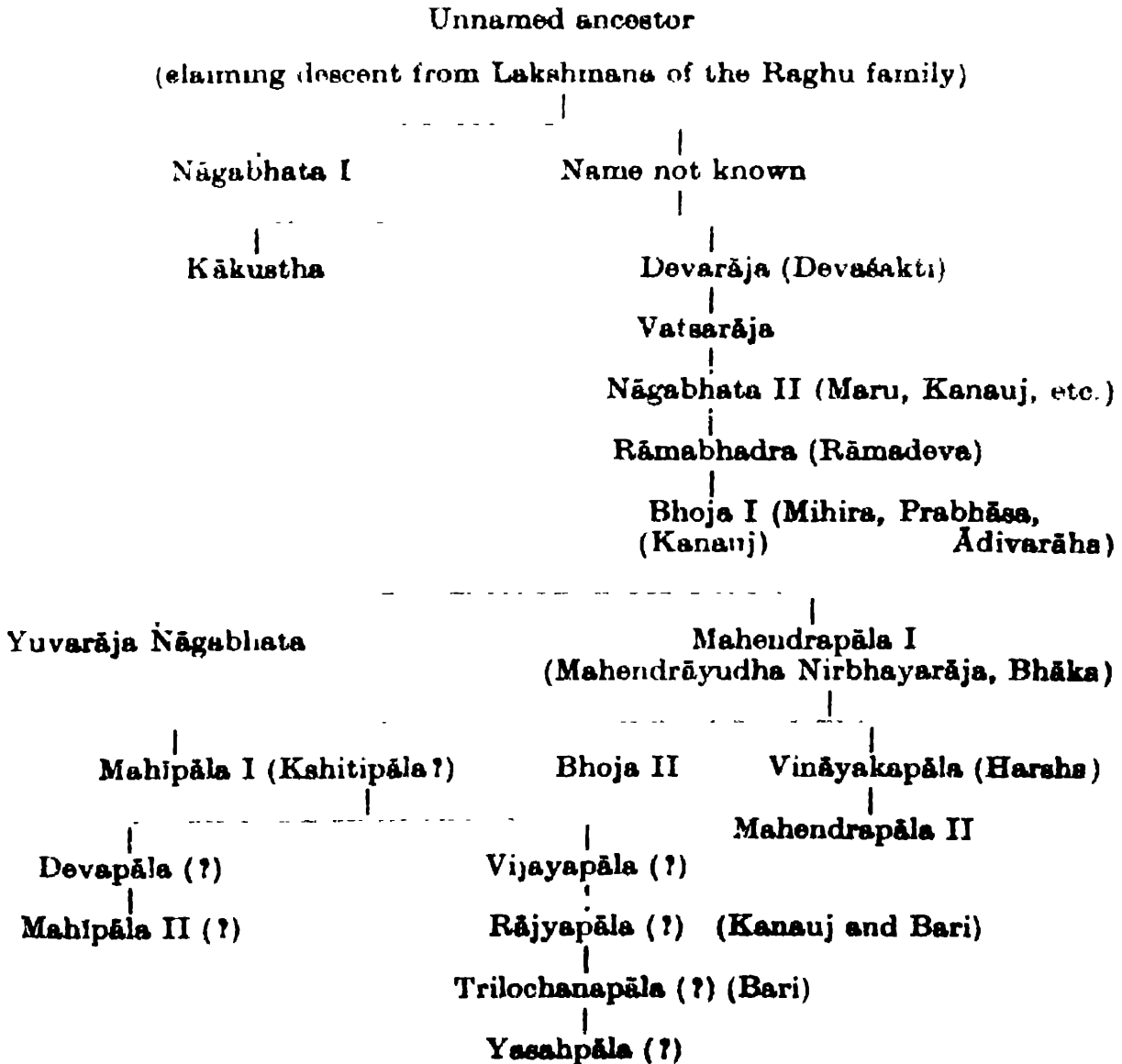
Kumāra Gupta II
(Kramāditya)

Vishnu Gupta

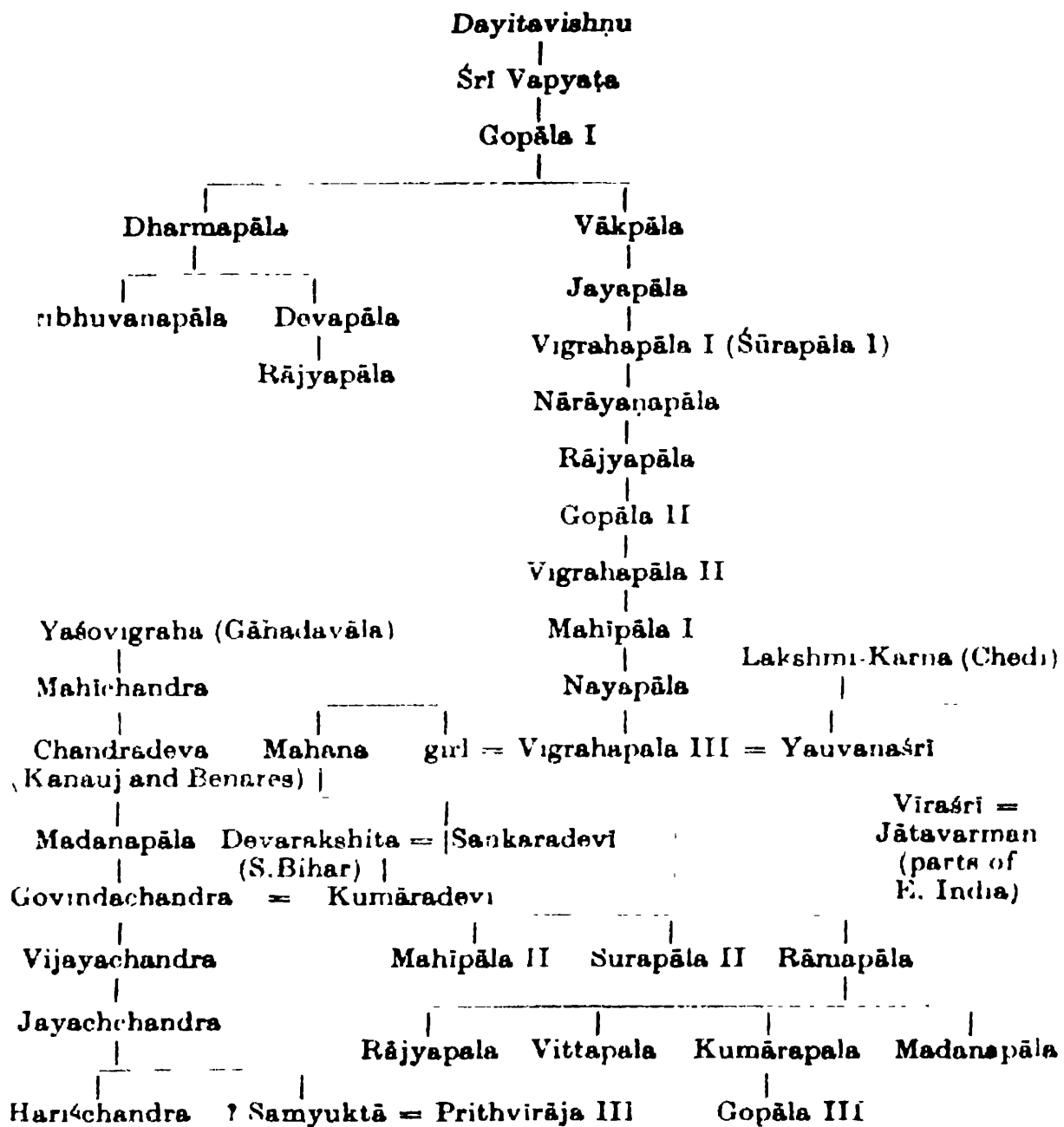
HOUSE OF PUSHYABHUTI



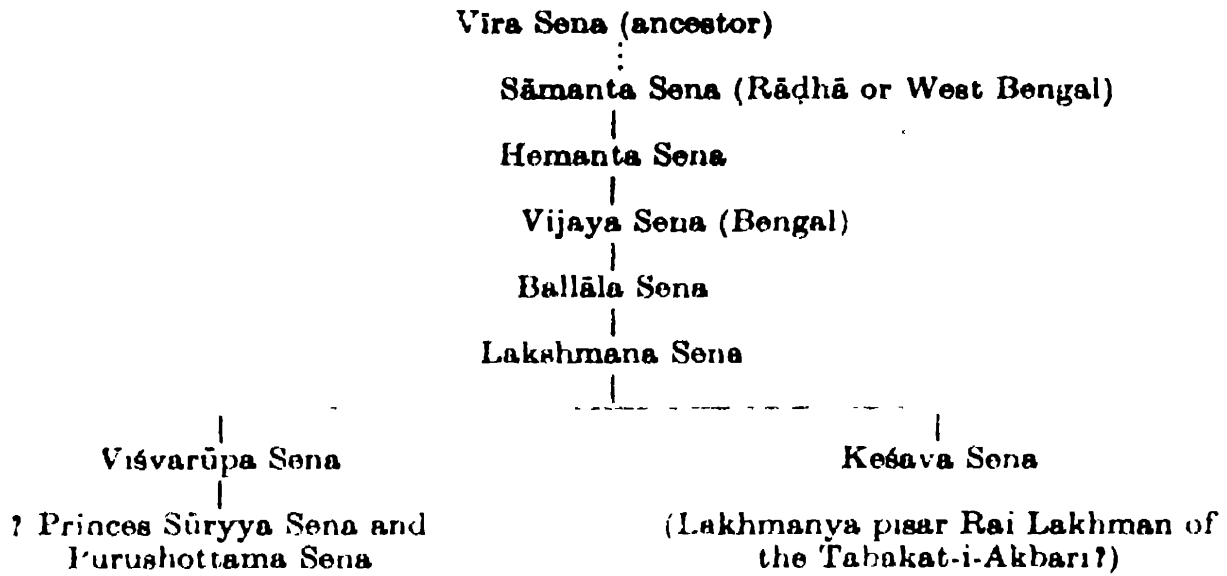
THE IMPERIAL PRATIHĀRAS



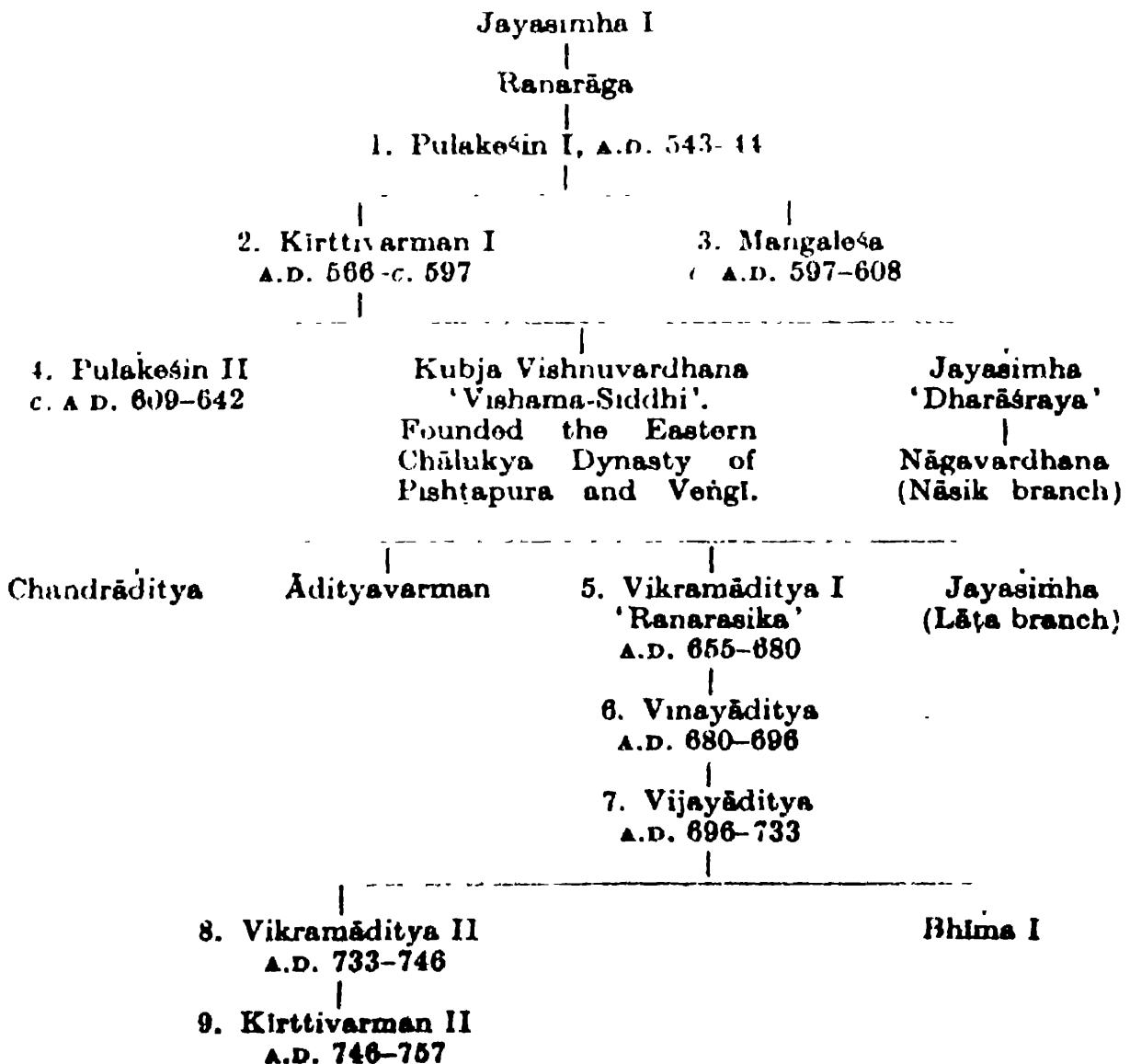
THE PĀLAS OF BENGAL AND THE GĀHADAVALAS



THE SENAS OF BENGAL



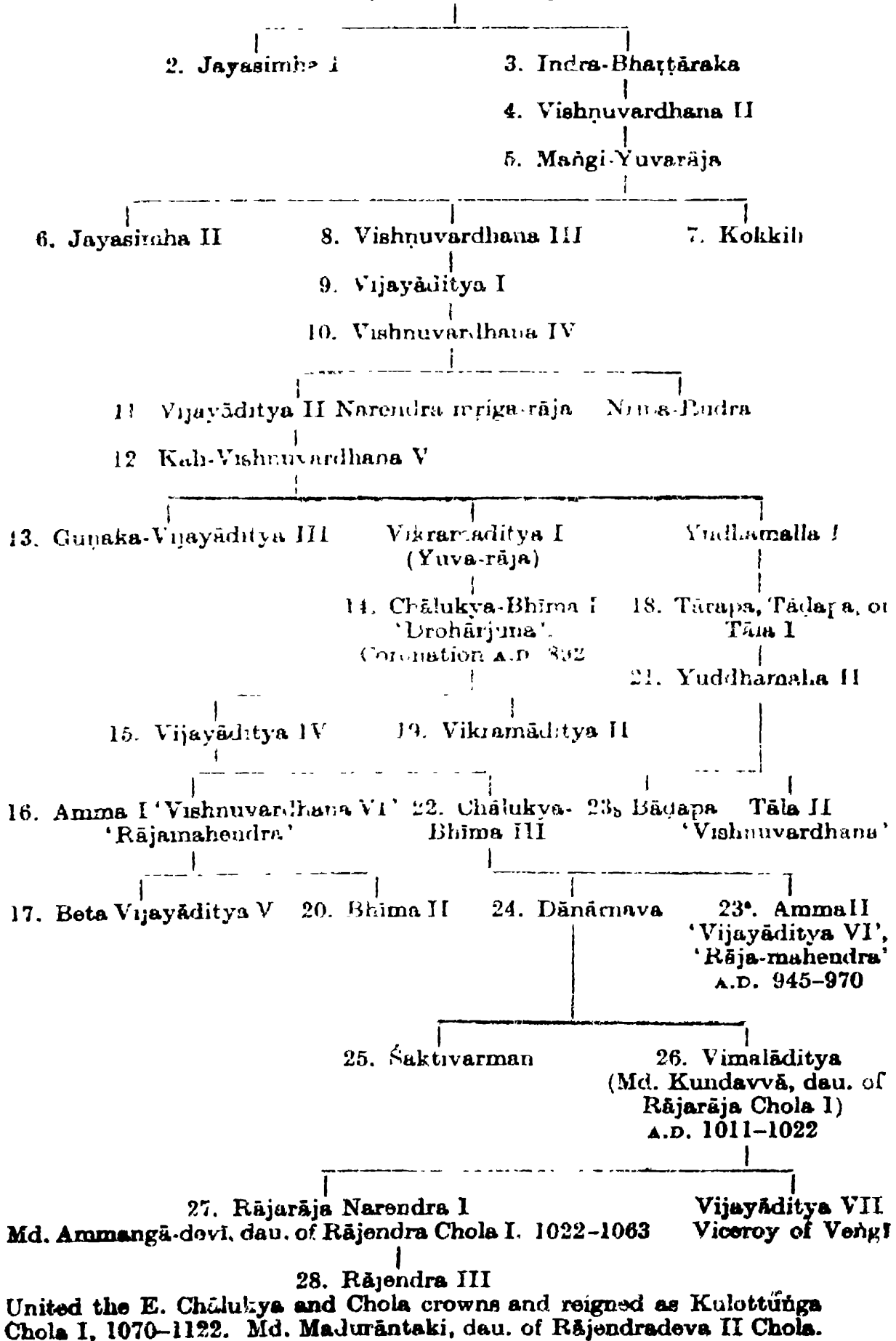
EARLY CHĀLUKYA KINGS



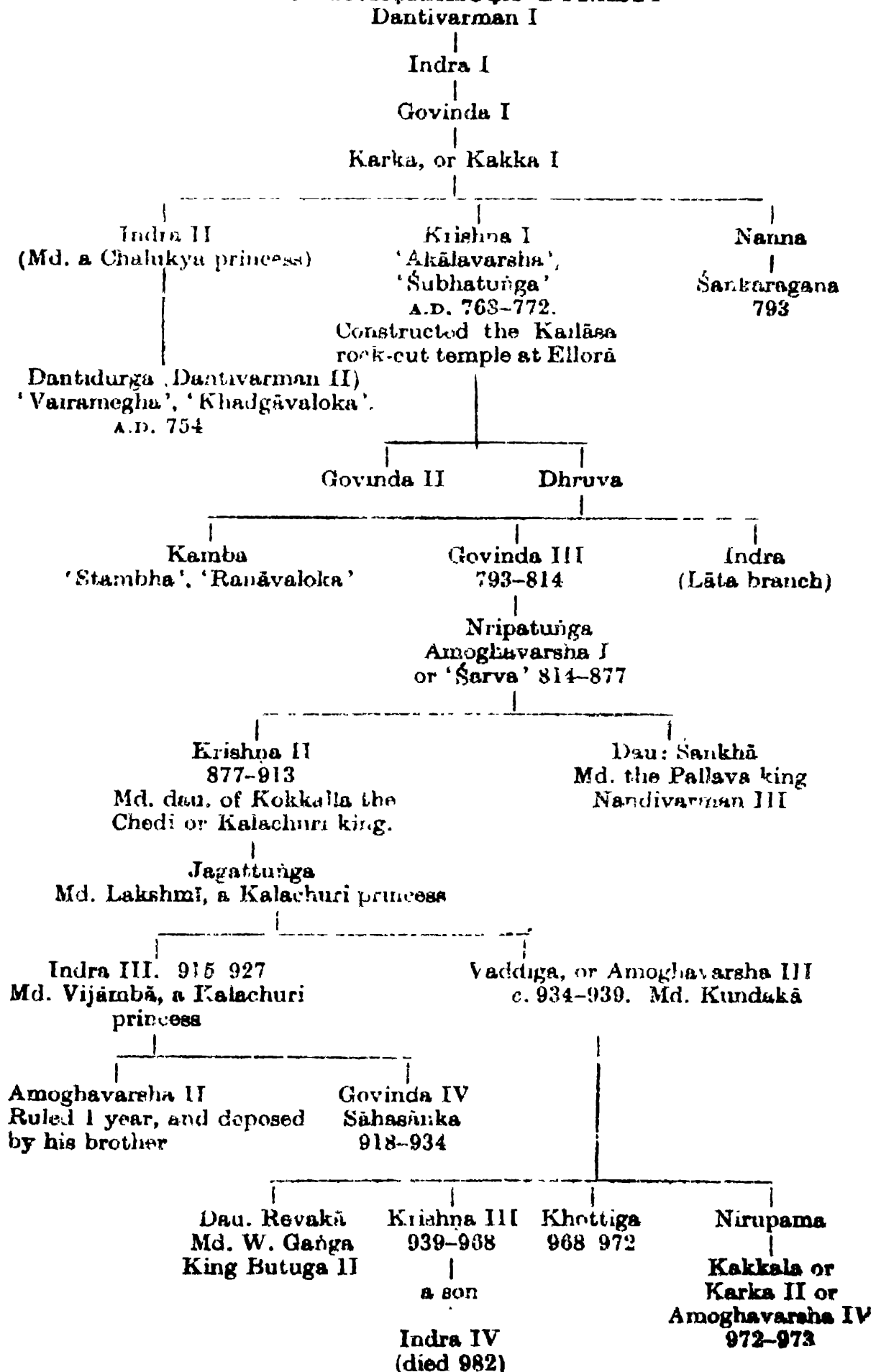
EASTERN CHĀLUKYA DYNASTY

1. Kubja Vishnuvardhana I

Brother of early Chālukya king Pulakeśin II

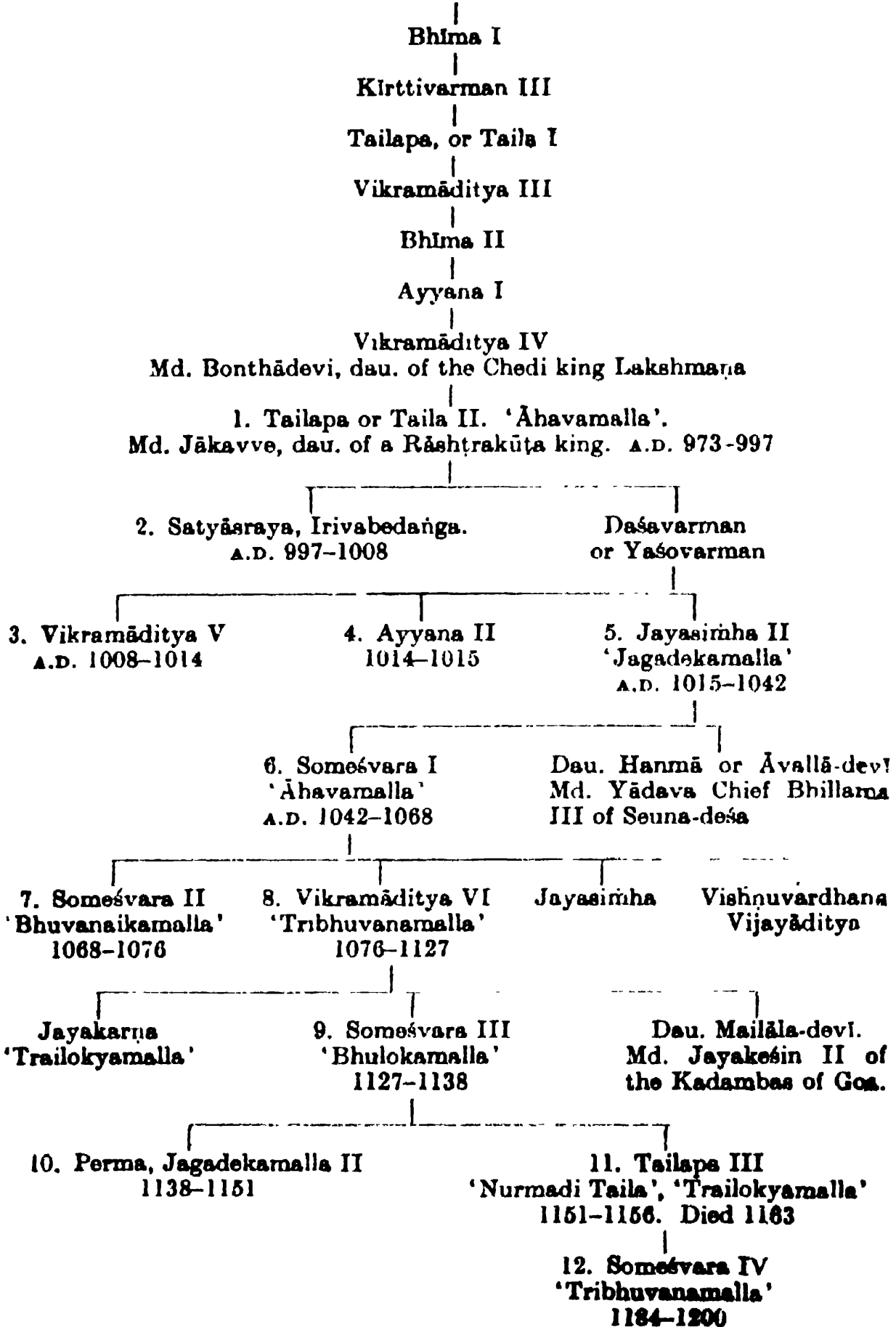


THE RĀSHṬRAKŪṬA DYNASTY

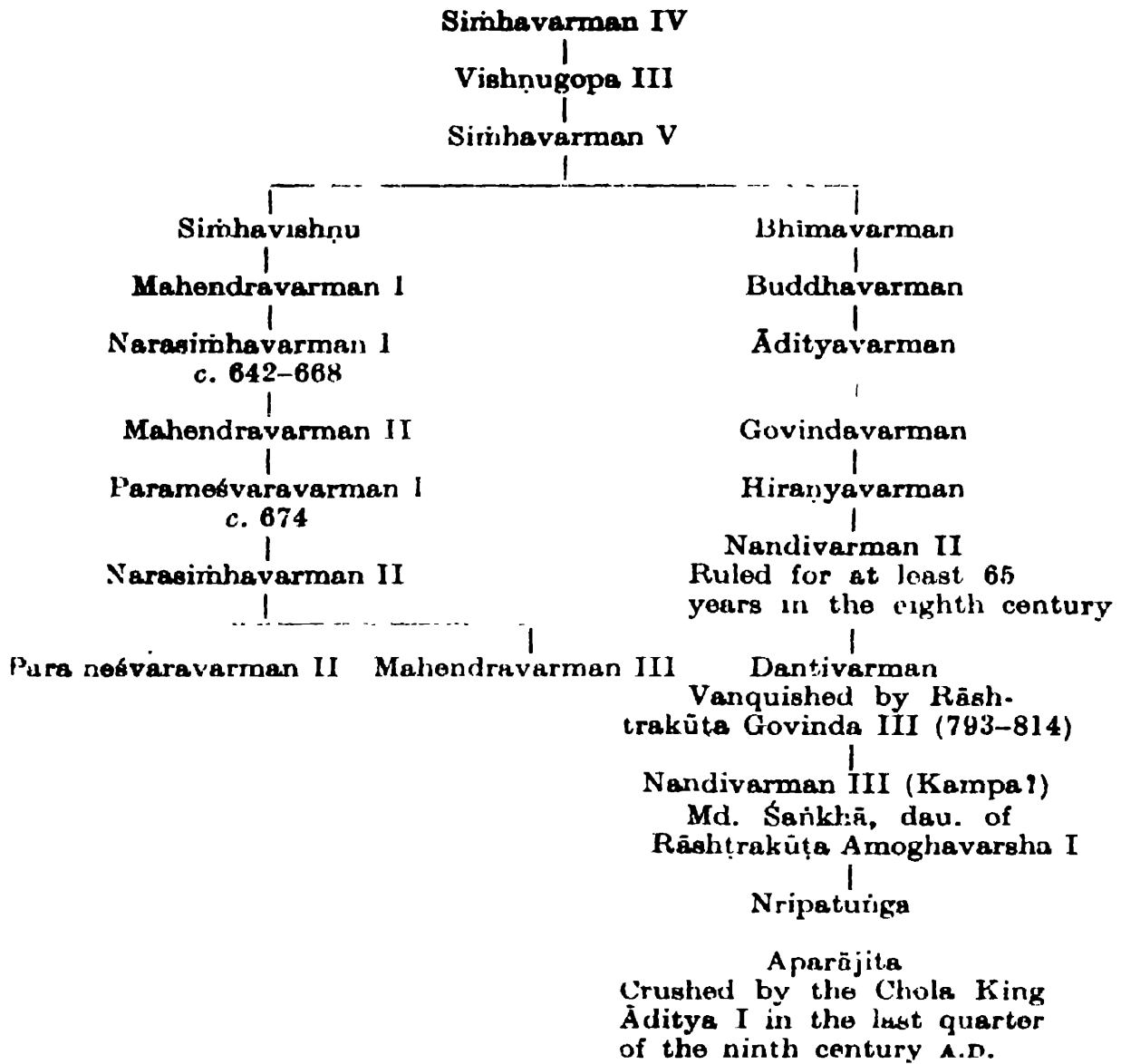


CHĀLUKYA DYNASTY OF KALYĀNA

Vijayāditya (696–733)



PALLAVA KINGS



CHOLA KINGS

Vijayālaya
Selzed Tanjore.
c. 846-871

Aditya I
c. 871-907

Parāntaka I
A.D. 907-953

Rajaditya I
947-949

Gandarāditya
949-957

Arihaya
956-957

Madurāntaka Uttama
969-985

Parāntaka II
'Sundara Chola'
956-973

Aditya II, or
'Karikāla II'
956-969

Rājarāja I
'Mummadi-Chola',
'Nurmadi-Chola',
'Arumoli-deva',
985-1016

RAjendra I
 'Pandita-Chola',
 'Mudikonda Chola',
 'Gangaikonda-Chola',
 'Nigarill-Chola'. 1012-1044

Dau. Kundavvā
Md. E. Chalukya
king Vimaladitya.

Dau. Ammangadevi
Md. Rājārāja I
E. Chālukya

Itājādhirāja I
'Jayamkonda Chola'
Yuvarāja 1018-1044
King 1044-1054

Rājendradeva II
1052-1064

Virarājendra
1063-1069

Rājamahendra
1060-1063

Dau. Madhurāntaki
Md. E. Chālukya
Rājendra III,
Kulottunga I

Rajendra III
Kulottunga Chola I
1070-1122

Adhi-rājendra
1067-1070

Dau. md. Vikra-
māditya VI of
Kalyāna

**Rājarāja
Viceroy of
Vengi**

**Mummadi-Chola
Viceroy of
Vengi**

**Vira Chola
Viceroy of
Vengi**

Vikrama-Chola
1118-1135

Kulottunga Chola II
1133-1150

Rajaraja II
1146-1173

Cousin
Rājādhirāja II
1163-1179
Successors
Kulottunga III
1178-1218
Rājārāja III
1216-1246
Rājendra IV
1246-1279

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